MY LADY LEGEND

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M. R. C. Marshall.

November 19 1893.

MY LADY LEGEND.

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MY LADY LEGEND

AND OTHER
FOLK TALES FROM THE NORTH

TRANSLATED FROM THE SWEDISH OF
ALBREKT SEGERSTEDT

BY

ANNA VON RYDINGSVÄRD
(*Baroness von Proschwitz*)

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY THE AUTHOR ADDRESSED TO AMERICAN READERS.

BOSTON
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To my Husband

I DEDICATE THESE LEGENDS
FROM HIS NATIVE
"SAGA LAND."

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PREFACE.

THE LITTLE ONES ON A JOURNEY.

(Written expressly for Mrs. von Rydingsvärd, by the author, Albrekt Segerstedt, as a Preface to her translation of his Sagor.)

One evening not long ago, there came a letter, a friendly letter, to all the little ones, inviting them far, far away.

There was great rejoicing among them, you may be sure. Perhaps you have taken a journey sometime yourself, and know how pleasant it is to come out into the world.

"Where are we going?" "Where shall we go?" they cried, with gladness and expectancy shining in their eyes.

"Far, far away over the sea; over there where the sun goes down; to the distant Western land, to America!"

"Oh! over there! over there! To the land of high mountains, wide prairies, great lakes and mighty rivers?"

"To the land of wonders, where Franklin learned how to tame the lightning, where Fulton made ships to go without oars or sails, where Edison showed how the thoughts of men can travel over land and sea on fine metal threads?"

"To the land of the noble Washington and Lincoln, the friends of their native land? to the land that Cooper tells us tales about and of which Longfellow has sung?"

"Yes, children; just there shall you go."

"Oh! how delightful that will be."

There was such a rejoicing among the little ones; but one of them, more thoughtful than the rest, asked with trembling voice:

"But over there — the west wind has whispered to me about it — over there steam-engines roar so loud, railroad trains rush along so fast, and everything is so full of life, so grand, that the people will not hear us, not see us! Our voices are so weak; we are so small!"

What could I answer to this? Perhaps the thoughtful little one was right. But I would not destroy the courage of my little ones, not deny them the pleasure that might be awaiting them. Because I hoped, and

I believe, that even over there in the wonderland, there are warm hearts beating in great and small, child-like hearts, which will open and give the travelers a warm home to dwell in.

And so they are coming to you now, with greetings from their far away home land in the North, greetings to all those who love the bright kingdom of Legend.

And if you will receive the little strangers kindly, you will make them very happy.

They expect a joyful "Welcome!" and now you will find them very near you; only turn the leaves!

MY LADY LEGEND.

MY LADY LEGEND.

"Hyu-u-u, hy-u-y-y," sang the Wind, and chased the Snowflakes till they flew down terrified, like a flock of white doves when the hawk pursues them. But outside of the window, right by the corner, the flakes were captured; they could not fly any further, they were so tired.

"Here we will sink down," said they. "We, too, we, too," cried they who came after. So they rested against one another, row after row, till the snow-drift grew and became ever higher and higher.

"What are you doing here? Up with you!" cried the Wind. He likes a commotion and will not allow anything to remain still. He was angry. If he but caught a little flake, he would whirl about with her, away over land and sea, till the poor little thing became so dizzy that she did not know where she was, and she never saw father, mother or sisters again.

This is why the flakes in the drift were so frightened that they huddled close up to one another.

"Hold me in, hold me in," cried the little ones to each other, and turned perfectly white with fear.

Higher and higher the drift grew, because the flakes stood by each other faithfully; and when this is so, even the weak grow strong.

Inside in the warm room stood the children and looked out through the window.

"Oh! see how high the drift gets," said they, and pointed at it with their fingers. They stood on tiptoe so they could see it better, for they did not dare to go out and look at it. If they should do that, the north wind would come instantly and pinch their little cheeks with his cold, sharp fingers. He was angry with order, old North Wind, and lashed without exception, all whom he came across, and the darker it grew at night, the angrier he grew also.

"Piff-paff, piff-paff!" sounded from the chimney place; it was the fire that snapped and crackled, and immediately the little ones who stood at the window, gathered around this cheerful companion. The small flames leaped from twig to twig and got both red and warm. Then there was a knock at the door.

"Come in, come in," shouted the rosy lips.

"Thank you, most kindly. Whew! it is dreadfully cold out," said she who came in through the door.

The stranger was a girl with gleaming eyes that sparkled in a wonderful manner. When she took off her hood, rich, waving curls fell about her forehead and cheeks, and reached far down on the full garments she wore.

"Oh! what a wonderful dress you have on," said little Elin;* "it is not a bit like ours; it has neither waist nor sleeves, but it fits so nicely!"

"Do you think so?" replied the stranger, and smilingly shook her head. She took each one of the little ones by the hand, and smiled so tenderly that she immediately won their hearts, and little Mia† laid her head upon the stranger's knee, and gazed into the sparkling eyes.

"Oh, listen to Boreas!" said one, "now he is tearing his beard! Think how good it was that you found our house, else perhaps you might have frozen. But your hands are not cold one bit," went on the child who was talking, taking the stranger girl's soft hands. "Why, you are real warm, and you have been out in such weather."

"I get warm at once when I am received as I was here," said the stranger, and smiled. "And if I find it cold in one place, I go immediately to another."

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* Pronounced Ai-leen. † Pronounced Me-a.

"Oh! do you do that?" cried the children. "But is your horse never tired?" added they.

"Oh, no, oh, no! he never gets tired; he can travel from heaven to earth, and from the earth to the stars, and from the cold North Pole to the palm groves of the south in an instant."

"What a lot of lovely things you must see!"

She nodded, and then told them about many things she had seen and heard. She told about the wonders away in southern lands, where the air is laden with the perfume of a thousand flowers; she told about the icebergs at the Poles, about the Northern Lights, about winds and snowflakes. She knew what the waves say, what the trees whisper and the birds sing; yes, she could even understand what the straws, the matches and the tattered shoes on the brush heap think. About great and small, about what is on the earth and under the earth — yes, about everything she had something to tell.

And so the time flew fast, the fire went out, and the glowing coals began to fall apart, but none of the children had noticed it.

"Oh, stay, stay!" cried they, when she rose at last to go.

"Not longer now; not longer this time," she replied, and kissed them all.

"But you will surely come again, sweet one, come again!" said one of the children.

"You will be sure to come again, you look so kind," said another.

Then the stranger standing in the doorway nodded a farewell to them.

"But what is your name?" cried the children, for they had forgotten to ask it before.

"My name is Legend," answered the stranger, and was gone.

But when the world grows dark without, when old Jack Frost knocks at the window, and the cheerful fire crackles on the hearth, then Legend comes to tarry with those who receive her in a friendly spirit.

LASSE'S FUR OVERCOAT.

Lasse * was a good boy, no one could deny that, but he sometimes behaved in rather a stupid manner. Still one could forgive him for that, so much the more, as other people sometimes do the same.

Just listen: It once happened that Lasse was to have a fur overcoat — for that is a necessary thing when it is very cold — and every man who could afford it had such an article of dress. So Lasse went to the city to buy fur, because there was none to be found in the village where he lived. He went to a dealer in furs.

"Good-day, Mr. Furdealer; I want to buy some pelts," said Lasse, and the man showed him some very fine skins. They were all white but one, which was black; but that made no difference, because the fur was to be turned inside. Yes, the black one ought to make a very fine coat, they both thought, so Lasse went home delighted with his purchase.

But Lasse intended to make the coat himself,

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* Pronounced Lar-sie.

because he was not unhandy with his needle; the worst part was the cutting out, for he did not know how to do that.

"But I will go to the other village folks and borrow patterns, then it will go all right," thought Lasse, and he started out. He went into the nearest neighbor's first.

"I am going to make a fur coat," said Lasse, "and I would be much obliged if I could borrow a pattern to cut it out by."

"That is a good thing to do," said the peasant, "but see here, do not make it too long, for that would be the worst thing that could happen."

The peasant was a short man, so short coats fitted him; Lasse, on the contrary, was tall, but the peasant never thought of that.

"Thank you for your advice," said Lasse, "I shall not forget it." And he went out.

After he was outside he thought like this:

"It would be a good thing to get several patterns and have more to go by; the coat would be so much the better." So he went into the sheriff's and made known his errand.

"By all means make the coat roomy and wide, or it will be good for nothing," said he, because he was thick about the waist. He did not remember that Lasse was thin, as young striplings usually are.

And Lasse thanked him for his advice, and promised to follow it, of course.

Then Lasse went from one to another through the whole village; one advised him to make long sleeves, another to put the fur on the outside, still another to turn it inside. An old soldier who was active and warm-blooded, as old warriors sometimes are, advised Lasse to leave holes for ventilation on the back, "else you will melt with the heat," said he.

After Lasse had been to every house, he went home and began to cut out the coat, and it was a queer one, for he followed the advice of each person. One sleeve was so short that it only reached to the elbow, while the other was so long that only the tips of his fingers could be seen. The lower part of the coat was so full that it would have reached around the sheriff's thick body, while the upper part was so narrow that Lasse could scarcely breathe. He turned the fur outside on the back, and as it was black and the skin light, it looked ridiculous. And on this piece he had cut a big hole, so he should not melt with the heat.

Well, he looked queer when he got the coat on. But he thought it was very fine, because he had followed the advice of so many wise folks. Then he went out to show himself to the village.

The big pigs in the garden were the first to see him, and they rushed up and down hill and tore up the ground. The animals had never seen anything so remarkable before as Lasse's fur coat, so they sprang out through the gate in terror, and squealed so loud that all the people who sat in the little cottages looked out of the windows.

"Oh, goodness gracious!" they cried when they saw Lasse, and old women, children and youths rushed out on the village street to examine the funny coat.

"Where are you going?" "What have you dressed yourself up so fine for?" they called after him, screaming and laughing.

"Oh, look! he has a chimney on his back, and it is black with soot; hurrah! hurrah!" yelled a whole crowd of boys who ran after Lasse. And the dogs, children and pigs followed, till Lasse grew so ashamed of his coat that he ran home as fast as he could, the crowd at his heels.

A bull that was grazing on a hill, became angry at the noise, and when he caught sight of the great black patch of fur on Lasse's back, he started after him, roaring "Buuh!" caught him on his horns and tossed him right up in the air. Luckily for Lasse, he fell on the other side of the fence, or he might have been gored to death; but at last he reached his father's cot.

When he went in his mother was just going to settle the coffee, and in fright let the pot drop on the floor, so the hot coffee came on the cat's paws; she cried, "Yam, yam!" sprang upon the table and spit at Lasse, who stood shamefacedly in the door.

"What in the wide world has happened to you?" shrieked his father; "you have completely ruined the fur and made yourself the laughing stock of the whole village beside."

"Yes, and then you frightened me so as to make me spoil the coffee and scald the cat's paws," said his mother; but Lasse only cried.

"I have taken the advice of everybody in the whole town," said Lasse, "and still it is not right!"

"Have you been to the tailor with it?" asked his father.

"No," said Lasse, "I never thought of that."

"Remember, that when a man wants to make a fur coat, he needs to ask the tailor, if he does not understand how to do it himself, but he should not ask anybody and everybody, because if he does, he is sure to make a fool of himself as you have done now."

So Lasse went to the tailor, but he has not been able to afford a new coat yet, because he was without one when I saw him yesterday, for the one he made was just good for nothing.

THE FLOWER BULB.

WHEN the mild spring sun began to shine, a flower bulb lay in a window enjoying the warm rays and exulting in the clear light. But the gardener came in and carried away the bulb, in order to plant it in the ground.

The little grave in the garden soil looked dark and terrible, and the bulb felt grieved and trembled when it sank therein, because it is so hard for a plant to part with the clear, beautiful sunlight.

But scarcely was the earth packed around it before it felt itself thrilling with a hitherto unsuspected life. The green leaves, the wonderful flowers that formerly slumbered unconscious within the colorless shell, sprang forth, and soon the bulb changed to a beautiful, fragrant Easter lily.

" How foolish was my sorrow over the dark grave ! " thought the lovely flower ; " my true life could not begin until I had been hid in its bosom."

THE THREE WISHES.

There were once three men who were out traveling, and as their paths lay in the same direction, they thought they could just as well keep each other company, for that would be more agreeable than traveling alone.

Not one of them was contented, and they soon agreed that it was a wretched world, or at least a miserable country in which they lived. Each one thought that he deserved a better lot, and this feeling bound them together.

I must now tell what they were also, for one ought to know. The first one was a merchant with cloth to sell, which he carried in a bundle on his back. He always sold so cheap that he lost on every yard; still he had wandered around several years, and it was very good of him to do so when the reward was so scanty.

The second was a cabinet maker and a master workman too. No one within seven kingdoms could make such fine furniture as he could, because he said so himself, and more than that I do not know of him, which is to be regretted.

The third was a woodchopper. That is very hard work, especially if one does not wish to get a crooked back, and this woodchopper did not wish to. Therefore he had laid aside his axe, and thought to rise in the world; but that is not so easy when one gives up working.

After they had gone a little distance, they became tired and sat down to rest by the roadside. While they were sitting there, an old woman came out of the forest; but I must tell you it was no ordinary old woman. She seated herself on the grass opposite the men, and they all fell to talking. Each man considered his work the very hardest in the world, as every one could see.

"Still it is best as it is," said the woman, "because if people should always get their wishes, it would be bad for them; trust me for that!"

"Well, you may say that," said the merchant, "you who have never seen more of the world than this little district; if I could have my way awhile, life would not be so dull."

"How would you have it, then?" said the woman.

"Well," said the merchant, "I should only wish that all I drew upon might grow long; that is certainly not an immoderate wish, but if I could have it granted I should be contented."

"Oh! there is no art in making cloth stretch out!" said the woodchopper. "I should be satisfied with a trifling thing. If everything I struck should immediately fall asunder, I should be content. Then a man could chop many arms full of wood in a day and still have time to eat his dinner."

"Now you two have told how you would like to have it," said the cabinet-maker, "I can just as well tell my simple wish; nothing great after yours. I should wish that all I put together would be firm as rock, then one could find a sale for his work and all go finely."

"Those were simple wishes enough, old dame," said the woodchopper, slapping her on the shoulder, and then passed round the snuff.

"Ah, but I believe you would regret it if they should be fulfilled," said the woman, and took up her basket to go.

"No, indeed," said all in one breath.

"If you think so, then you shall get your wishes," said the woman. "All that you draw upon shall grow long! All that you strike upon shall fall in pieces! All that you put together shall be firm as rock!" While she was saying this, she pointed with her cane to each one of the three men and then vanished.

"That was a very queer soul," said the first; "did you see where she went?"

No, no one had seen that.

"Just think if it should be as she foretold!" said the woodchopper, and struck his hands against a piece of timber, when lo! the heavy log immediately fell in two pieces. All were so surprised that they sprang up, and the woodchopper tried again in another part of the log, and crack! went that in two also.

Then the cabinet-maker put together two pieces of wood, and look! they clung together like rock. The merchant took a piece of cloth out of his bundle and pulled it and it became as long as he wished.

All three hurrahed and swung their caps. Now life would be gay — that was certain — and they went on.

A little while after the merchant took out his handkerchief to blow his nose, but as he did so, he happened to pull his nose a little, which was a bad thing, because it began to grow so long, oh! so long; certainly a half a foot longer than it was before, and that is much upon a nose. When the lumberman got a sight of it, he thought it looked so comical that he began to laugh loudly and slap his hands upon his knees, when his legs immediately broke in two.

The cabinet-maker was so surprised over the whole thing that he cried, "Oh! oh!" and clapped his hands; and they would not come apart, but stuck together firm as rock.

They made a fine picture out there, you may believe. The merchant stopped and tried to push in his long nose, but he did not succeed; the woodchopper wished to get up, but that was not to be done; the cabinet-maker ran and tore at his hands to get them apart, but that was plainly impossible.

"Oh, how stupid we were!" cried the whole company in one voice, and stupid enough they had been.

"If I were only as I was before!" said the cabinet-maker, "then I should, indeed, work; I had really nothing to complain of."

The others thought the same, and it was high time for them to get sensible.

But I do not know how it went with them afterwards; perhaps they are to be found on the same spot to-day.

THE CHRISTMAS SPRUCE-TREE.

AMONG the high and stately trees in the forest, there grew a spruce-tree that was no taller than a man, and when a spruce-tree is no taller than that, it looks very small indeed.

But the other trees round about were so large and spread their branches out so far on all sides that the little spruce could not have grown taller even if she had chosen.

Although she was little, she both heard and saw and listened gladly to the conversation of the other trees, which was very learned and also depressing for the little bush, which could never become great.

"I am the glory of the forest," said the haughty oak; "look at my mighty trunk and my powerful branches, how they reach up towards heaven! The little worms bite off my buds and think thereby to hinder my growth, but what impression can the insects make on my strength and hardiness! I will upward, and upward I go, because it is my destiny to do so. I furnish planks for men, from which they build their ships, and then I defy the storms on the ocean as I did the thunder in the forest before."

"And I follow you on the foaming waves," said the tall, graceful pine, and waved her proud crown. "When the ships fly over the billows, I uphold the flapping sails; without masts the fleets would be helplessly lost among the foaming breakers. Yes, my calling is a high one," she ended.

"And we warm the dwellings of mankind when Winter comes hither from his summer palace at the North Pole," said the white-stemmed birch, and smilingly shook her fine, delicate branches; "and in summer men throw themselves gladly at my feet and enjoy the shade and fragrance which my luxurious branches spread around them."

"I flatter myself that I perform the same service to man that you do," said a tall fir-tree, and gracefully drooped her lovely branches towards the ground on which she had cast down many smooth, shining cones, which looked so beautiful on the new-fallen, white snow carpet, which Winter had spread there.

And so the wind sighed through the forest, which nodded to him, for he was a friend of their childhood, and gladly seen by the trees, although he sometimes caught them so quickly in his arms that he threw them down.

"That boy, that boy!" said those that would remain standing, "he is always so wild; but one can afford to excuse him on account of his youth," and so they continued to nod to him.

But the little spruce had heard how the other trees talked about their high destination, and so she thought: "What destination have I, then?" But however much she thought about the thing, she never arrived at a clear understanding of it, and so she decided to ask the great trees about it.

So she questioned the oak, the pine and the fir, but they all bore their heads so high that they did not hear what the little one said. Only the birch took up her question.

"You have no vocation," said the birch, "because you can never grow large enough; you can only be a Christmas-tree," added she.

"And what is a Christmas-tree?" continued the little bush.

"That I cannot exactly say," replied the birch, "but sometimes when the days are the shortest, people come out here into the forest and when they see a spruce that is not of any use, they say, 'That will do for a Christmas spruce.' Then they chop down the bush and carry it away from the forest. What they afterwards do with it, I cannot tell; very likely throw it away, because it could not be used for anything." And the little spruce bush asked the hares that hopped past, and the owls that sat in the pines, and the squirrels that came to carry away the fir cones, but no one could say more than the birch; no one knew what vocation a Christmas spruce-tree had.

Then the little spruce bush wept because it had no calling, and could not be of any use in the world. And the tears hardened into clear, translucent drops, but we call them gum.

Then there came a boy into the forest with an axe in his hands, and when he saw the spruce-tree, he said:

"Perhaps that will do for a Christmas-tree." He chopped it down, laid it on a sled and dragged it home.

The boy, however, put a wooden foot under the spruce-tree and sold it and it was taken into a large handsome room and dressed up with fine paper and small colored candles; candies and packages were tied on the branches, so the little tree became perfectly confused with the many new things she saw.

But along towards evening the spruce was put into a large room, all by itself. Here everything was silent and still, and the little tree, who stood there in the darkness, began again to think gloomy thoughts.

But presently the door opened, and a lady came in and lighted the candles. How light and glowing it was within then! The little tree had never been able to think of anything so beautiful. From an adjoining room came the sound of clear, childish voices, singing a beautiful Christmas song. They sang:

" Upon this day is born a child,
  So was God's plan and pleasure:
Its mother was a Virgin mild; —
  Christ, Son of God, our Treasure."

So ran the Christmas psalm, and the little spruce-tree stood spell-bound and listened. But the doors flew open, and a crowd of merry children rushed in.

"Oh! how pretty, how fine!" cried the troop of young creatures, and danced in a ring around the tree, while the father played on a violin and the tiniest child sat nodding and cooing in its mother's arms.

"Ah! now I know what I was made for," thought the little tree. "I was intended to give joy to the little ones, because I myself am so small and humble."

THE OLD FOOT-STOOLS.

Out in the country a few miles from the city, lay a fine, large estate surrounded by rows of trees a hundred years old, and a park as large as a small forest.

The dwelling house itself was like a castle, and everything in it was after the same style. Those who have possession of such places do not let them go easily out of their hands, but the man who owned this fine home was compelled to sell it and all that he had, for he had lost his money.

All the things were to be taken away and people went in and out to look at them.

" What extravagance ! " some said, and extravagance it certainly was, because everything was so rare and costly.

" When one lives so high as this, it will always end like this, and it is right so," said another, and he knew what he was speaking about, because he had been such a good friend to the formerly rich man, and had passed so many pleasant hours in his house.

But the beautiful things that must be sold at auction had also their speculations as to who should buy them.

"The rich earl will purchase me," said the gilded chandelier, and shone as brightly as she could, in order to eclipse the tea service which stood beneath.

"And the general with the many stars across his breast will certainly buy me," said a sofa, much puffed up.

And so each piece guessed in what way it would be called in; but it seldom came out as they reckoned.

Out in the anteroom stood a pair of foot-stools. They had never been out in the great world, but had sat nearly all their life, hidden in the garret. The reason of it was, that they had been ruined in being brought home from the cabinet-maker's; the covering had got spotted and spoiled, so they had been lodged in a corner of the garret.

Only once had they been present on a great occasion, and that was not at all great either, but the stools, who always before and since, were dwellers in the garret, thought it was something remarkable. They had not seen anything of the festivities, however, because the instant they were brought forward they were covered with something white. Then they had heard some one speaking solemnly; afterward they heard a voice say "Yes," loud and clear, and then another voice that said the same word, only so softly and bashfully it could hardly be heard.

After that there was the tramping of many feet, the clinking of glasses, then tramping again, then all became silent.

It was a wedding that had been celebrated, but the foot-stools did not realize that.

One of the maids in the house had married a young workman on the estate, and her mistress had allowed the two stools to be used for them to kneel upon; and forty years had flown since then.

The old stools stood there now and wondered if any one would buy them. They made bold to ask a fine mirror about it.

"Do you know any of the distinguished people here in the place?" inquired the mirror haughtily.

"No," replied the stools very bashfully.

"Ah, indeed! but now I look at you, I see at once that you could not have the acquaintance of such people. Oh! you are sure to end in the woodhouse, for no one wants to buy rubbish. Furthermore, we have no acquaintance with each other, and I beg to be spared any further questions." And the mirror came near cracking with vexation at the stools' presumption.

The poor stools trembled through their whole bodies, and, had they been able, they would certainly have wept, because no furniture, however old it may be, likes to be thrown out on the brush heap to be burned up.

Then the auction began. "First, second, third time!" sounded through the room. One after another the things were sold, but not as the furniture had reckoned on, because each one took whatever he thought would fit his rooms at home best.

Way out by the door stood a couple — a man and a woman. They were both aged, for many winters had passed over their heads, leaving them as white as snow.

They looked very good and venerable, these two; the old woman held the man's hand and he clasped his warmly about hers. Forty years they had journeyed together, sharing both good and ill days; they had been faithful to each other, for they loved each other as warmly as on their wedding day, when the minister stood inside the room there and pronounced the blessing over them. Yes, just where the auction was going on they had been united.

"Father dear, do not let them be taken away," said the aged woman, and pressed her husband's hand.

"Be calm, dear mother," answered he, and looked at her tenderly.

What did the aged couple think of buying?

"Here are a pair of old stools! They are ragged enough, though!" cried the auctioneer. And as such people are apt to do, he said some funny things about the stools, so that the people who stood around him laughed.

But the stools did not laugh, because it hurts one's feelings to be scorned for infirmity.

The aged man and woman did not laugh, either, for they thought it was a pity to ridicule the poor old furniture.

"Fifty *öre* — who will give fifty *öre?*" cried the auctioneer.

Then a voice which trembled a little spoke up and said:

"Two *riksdaler*."

The old man could have had them easily enough for fifty *öre*, but he would not bid so little for these particular stools, and the old woman gave him a grateful look, because he had thrown away one and fifty.

No one bid more; the auctioneer brought his hammer down and the stools went to the aged couple. The man took them, one under each arm, as carefully as if they had been children.

"Why are you so anxious to have the old stools?" asked a lady of the two.

"Well, gracious lady, you see we were married on them," replied the woman, "and my husband has always been so kind and good to me, that I longed to have them."

And so the two foot-stools came to belong to the aged pair, and received the place of honor before the window, and not every one was allowed to sit on them.

When the old folks' granddaughter was married they were again brought forward, and covered with white, and they are to go to the young pair when the aged ones have ended their days.

THE EMPEROR, THE COURTIER AND THE PEASANT.

ONCE upon a time there was an Emperor who ruled in China, the country where people wear pointed hats and shoes, and use two little round sticks called chopsticks, instead of knives and forks when they eat; they cannot take their food so conveniently, though, especially when they have to eat peas or soup.

The Emperor to whom we refer would have been very good if the courtiers had not spoiled him by admiring everything he did, no matter whether it was good or bad.

The instant the Emperor made the slightest remark, the Lord Marshal cried out, "Ah, how wise!" then the chamberlains cried, "Ah, how extraordinarily wise!" and then they bit their toes, which seems to be the way in China to express surprise. In this way, the sound of great admiration ran through the whole court.

And everybody copied everything the Emperor did, also; be it never so stupid or wrong, the courtiers were perfectly charmed with it. "It belongs to our office, and we get food and clothes as our reward," thought they. But as the Emperor in China in those days never talked with any one but his courtiers, he could not be expected to be anything but a bad prince, even if he had been ever so wise by nature.

In China, just as in other places, they long for spring and the flowers, and the Emperor felt the same longing, powerful as he was.

When the warm weather came he moved out into the country, and lived in a pleasure palace, that was built of the whitest porcelain tiles, and that was something fine, I assure you.

And now the time was approaching for the Emperor to move out. The Lord Marshal entered, bowed himself to the floor, and asked:

"Does the All-Most-Gracious Emperor command that it shall be spring?"

The Emperor bent his head the fourth part of a nod; that meant Yes.

"Command my brother, the Sun, to shine to-morrow, at the risk of being deprived of his position, tied up in a sack and sunk in the harbor, if he dare do otherwise, because I shall move to the country to-morrow," said the Emperor.

Now, I must say in passing, that the Emperor of China believes that he is brother to the Sun and cousin to the Moon; so the courtier sprang up, and wrote the Emperor's command to the Sun, on the finest Chinese paper, which he then burned up in the garden belonging to the castle, because he thought that in this way it would come to the Sun.

And then there was much running about, packing traveling bags and crown caskets, for the Emperor's journey to the summer palace, and there was a great bustling on all sides. But at last all was done, so they were able to set out at the right time, and if they had not, something dreadful would have happened.

The sun shone as beautifully as possible, and so did not get thrown into a sack, but was allowed to remain sitting in the heavens, which was surely a good thing.

In the morning, the day after the Emperor had moved out, a little bird seated itself just outside of his chamber and sang so beautifully that the Emperor had to get up from his bed, although it was so early in the morning that no one was awake in the castle. But when the Emperor got up, he thought the bird sang still more beautifully, so he was obliged to go out and look at it. He put on his gold shoes, his silk dressing gown, set his crown on his head and took his scepter in his hand and went out through the glass doors into the garden.

It was hardly six o'clock, so no one was awake. But when the Emperor came out into the garden, the bird flew into the forest and sang finer still. "That was stupid of me, not to command it to remain here," thought the Emperor; "now I am obliged to go out into the woods to see it." So he opened the gate and went out across the field.

It was a good distance to walk, but everything was so lovely in the morning hour, that the Emperor, who had never before been out so early, could not turn back, but continued to wander until he came to the edge of the woods.

A peasant was going back and forth, ploughing. "Good day, peasant," said the Emperor; "that must be an Emperor bird singing in the forest, because it sounds so beautifully."

"No, my Lord, the Emperor," said the peasant, taking off his cap, "that is a blackbird."

"You can call it so," said the Emperor; "but it is an Emperor bird, of course, when I say so, because I never make a mistake. It is certainly as large as a swan, with feathers gleaming like gold."

"No, my Lord, the Emperor," said the peasant; "it happens to be small and black."

At this instant the blackbird seated itself on a post in the fence directly opposite them, and sang again, and now it was plainly to be seen that the peasant was right.

"There must certainly be something wrong about the bird," said the Emperor; "because as I can never make a mistake, it must be just as I said."

"But, my Lord, the Emperor can certainly make a mistake," said the peasant. "Every human being does that, and you are not more than human."

The Emperor had never heard such a speech, and was so stupefied by it that he let the peasant go on.

"It is only the men at the court who say so," continued the peasant, "because they wish to have your good will. They agree to all that you say, even if it is ever so absurd, and they praise your actions, no matter how wrong they are."

"I can never believe that," said the Emperor, and for very surprise let his scepter fall to the ground.

"If my Lord, the Emperor, will only do as I say, a little while," said the peasant, "I will prove that it is true."

The Emperor promised to do so, although he could not comprehend how it was possible for him to be deceived. And now the courtiers came running in a procession over the fields, so that their slippers flew high in the air around them, for they had waked up and missed the Emperor. Tears ran down and dropped from their cheeks, because they had smelt of pepper root, so it should look as if they were weeping because the Emperor was gone.

"Command them to stop now," whispered the peasant, and the Emperor let them stop twenty yards away, right in a ditch, which served them right.

"We have wept the bitterest tears because of the Emperor's absence," said the Chief Master of Ceremonies, and dried his eyes with the handkerchief which held the pepper root, and all the remaining courtiers followed his example.

"How do you dare, you peasant, you, to stand right beside the Emperor?" said the Lord Marshal. "Go away to your plough."

"Say I am already standing beside my plough," whispered the peasant to the Emperor, by whose side he remained standing; the plough was quite a distance from them.

"Do you not see," said the Emperor, "that he already stands beside his plough?"

"Ah, I was mistaken," said the courtier. "Yes, now I see; he has been standing right beside his plough for a long time."

"Yes, he is just a little way the other side of it, I think," said another.

"Ask them," whispered the peasant, "if they have ever seen such white oxen as I am driving."

Now the peasant's oxen were coal black, without a single white spot on them.

"Have you ever in your life seen whiter oxen than these?" said the Emperor, pointing to the peasant's.

"No, never," said the first courtier; "they are perfectly snow white."

"Yes, they are whiter than snow," said another. "They are so dazzling white that it hurts the eyes to look at them!"

Now the Emperor began to suspect their bad counsel and found, besides, that he could be mistaken.

"Come hither with your ploughs and oxen," cried he to some peasants who were passing at a distance, ploughing, and they came immediately.

"There is nothing so pleasant to be found as ploughing," said the Emperor.

"No, it is an especially agreeable pleasure," said one of the courtiers.

"I am charmed when I only think of it," said another.

"It is more exhilarating than the most delicious wine," cried out a third, and so on.

"It rejoices me, my Lords, to know you think so," said the Emperor. "In order to insure you an agreeable summer, each one shall take a pair of oxen and plough here in the fields till its close; that is my command; begin!"

There was no help for it; the courtiers dared not do otherwise than obey, for if they had, the

Emperor would have caused them to be tied in a sack and cast into the ocean.

I really do not know how they got on afterwards, for they had never touched a plough before, and so knew nothing about the work. But the peasant went to the castle and became the Emperor's counselor, and the Emperor caused this whole story to be written with golden letters on a block of marble. Many have seen the inscriptions, but there are not many who have read them, which may be due to the fact that the Chinese alphabet is a little bewildering and hard to learn. But now you can tell all about it, can you not?

THE SWEET-BRIER ROSE.

Beside a great country road there grew a wild thorn-bush with big sharp thorns on the branches which, moreover, were clothed with only a few half-withered leaves. It stood there, a picture of malice and unfruitfulness; travelers shunned it and not a bird would build its nest in its branches.

One day a poor woman wandered by with a baby in her arms; her face was pale and thin; sorrow and anxiety were written on her brow and in her eyes, which were bent upon the little one that rested in her arms.

The child was sick, perhaps dying, and the mother, alone and with the deepest grief in her heart, stood on the road, far from any human habitation. She saw neither the flowers, nor the sun's bright rays which glowed in the west, nor the wild thorn-bush beside which, worn out with anxiety, she now sank down. She spread her shawl on the ground and laid the tender little thing upon it, but he did not open his eyes; only by the fever that throbbed in his breast could one see that he still lived.

Then the sorrowing mother stretched out her arms towards heaven, clasped her hands and prayed, as only a mother can pray, for her darling's life. She did not notice that she had flung her arms around the wild thorn-bush; she did not feel the sharp thorns piercing her breast; she thought only of God and her child.

She ended her prayer and turned again towards her darling, when lo! he had opened his great blue eyes, and his little mouth smiled to the mother and called her from most bitter sadness to blessed joy. With a sigh of gratitude, which came from the depths of her loving heart, she took the child in her arms and hurried away with flying steps.

Awhile after, a man passed along the road, and his eyes fell on the wild thorn-bush, which was no longer the same plant. It was covered with fresh green leaves, and among them shone out the loveliest red roses! They had sprung up from the blood drops which clung to the thorns when they pierced the praying mother's breast.

Her warm, devoted love had given new life to the half-withered, despised thorn-bush, which became transformed to the most beautiful sweet-brier rose-bush. The wanderer stood spell-bound before the lovely plant from which he broke a branch and set it in the ground, and from this branch have sprung all the beautiful, red, sweet-brier roses — the flowers of love.

STINGY-MÅNS.*

THERE was once a peasant who was so rich that all his bureau drawers were filled with shining silver dollars, the walls of his rooms were covered with shining copper kettles, and in his stables stood five splendid colts. He had so many fine things besides, that if I should try to tell about them all, this story would be so long you would fall asleep before the close.

Yes, he was a powerfully rich peasant and he wanted every one to know it, too. So he had a fine overcoat made which he wore in the middle of the summer, although he suffered terribly with the heat; but "one must live according to his circumstances," he thought. So he submitted to it. He even wrapped a yellow silk handkerchief around his neck, carried an umbrella under his arm and wore overshoes on his feet, even if it did not rain for fourteen days. "To show that I can afford them," thought he.

He believed that because he was so very rich, it was not necessary for him to bend himself to the poor people, even if they greeted him ever so kindly. When the bell ringer bowed, he touched the brim of his hat, and for the minister he took it off a little way.

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* Pronounced Moance.

But when the baron from the county seat drove past, the peasant bowed very politely, because the baron was said to be immensely rich. People said of the rich peasant that he was foolish and laughed at him, but he did not appear to notice this; he was probably near-sighted.

This peasant was named Måns; some called him "Rich-Måns," and he liked the name, but most people called him "Stingy-Måns," and this name he did not like at all.

The people who dwelt on Stingy-Måns' estate were as poor as he was rich. After a farm laborer had lived there awhile he was always in debt to Stingy-Måns, and no matter how hard he worked and toiled, his debts always became larger and larger.

When the people noticed this, they thought it was useless to wear themselves out when they were no better off for it, so they grew lazy and careless, and were of little service if Måns or the overseer did not stand over them.

The poorest of all, however, was Peter, for he was married and had five children whose appetites grew in the race with poverty. But Peter was neither lazy nor careless like the other laborers; he worked, no matter how dark the future looked. Folks said he was simple to throw himself away, and stupid to believe there would be any change. But Peter was persistent in his trust; for he had read that one ought to have a firm hope, and for that reason he continued to work and be cheerful. So he rubbed his strong hands, took hold of the plough or axe and worked briskly, singing a joyful song.

Up to this time neither Peter nor his wife and children had suffered much from hunger, although many times the table had been bare and the meal chest empty. On such occasions a good neighborly woman had brought them a few cakes, or a traveler would give the children a penny for opening the gates, and so on.

In Peter's cottage there dwelt a little hobgoblin, who wished Peter well from the bottom of his heart. He often stood on the floor in the moonlight with his little red cap awry, his hands behind his back, and pondered on some way to make it better for his friends. As soon as any one awoke, he disappeared at once behind the stove, so that no one caught sight of him; but he rendered many services to the household unnoticed.

If any one of the children pulled the bedclothing off on cold winter nights, he put it back on them and tucked them up very carefully. If a rat came and gnawed at the scanty supply of biscuits, he pinched its nose, so it ran away as fast as it could. In this way he contributed much to the comfort in the poor little cot.

One day Peter needed to go to the mill to grind the corn which was left in the bag, but as he was also obliged to go out and work for Stingy-Måns, he did not get a chance to go with the grist, for the reason that he was not able to do two things at the same time. He was at a loss what to do and stood pondering awhile about it, because the meal was out.

Then the hobgoblin caught him by the skirt of his coat, and led him up to the garret; but Peter did not know that the hobgoblin drew him there; he thought he went up there to get a whetstone that hung on the roof of the garret. Just as he came up there, his eyes fell upon an old handmill, which was lying in a corner. Peter had owned this for many years, but had entirely forgotten its existence.

"I will take that down and put it in order," said Peter, "and then I can grind the corn in it; it was a lucky chance that brought me up here," he added.

If Peter had only known who led him up there he would not have said it happened by chance, for nothing happens that way.

In the meantime he took the mill and put it in order and made it strong again; then he threw in the corn and drew the stone around, and the mill worked so easily (for the hobgoblin was helping) it was a pleasure to do it. The grist passed through an old sieve and became very fine meal, so that Peter and his family were glad and thankful.

Just as the meal was done, there came an old woman from the next farm, and asked to borrow a little of it, because she had nothing to eat, and Peter's folks, who were always helpful, gave her a scoop full in the towel she brought.

So the meal was cooked into porridge and it was unusually fine porridge, because generosity is such a good spice to food.

And the old woman praised the meal which she borrowed. "I have never seen the match for this meal;" these were her own words.

Then all the neighbors came to Peter with corn and asked to grind it in his mill, and each one left a few kernels for him, so that the poor family had plenty to eat.

One day when Stingy-Måns went into his garden he saw too men passing by, each carrying a bag on his back, and he asked them where they were going. They told him they were going to Peter's to grind corn, and also informed him that Peter owned an excellent hand-mill.

This news filled Stingy-Måns with envy, and he at once made up his mind to take the hand-mill away from poor Peter. Calling him in he said: "You are so heavily in debt to me that I could put you in prison if I wanted to, but as I am a kind-hearted man, I should not like to do you any harm, so I shall only take your mill towards the payment of your debts."

Now Stingy-Måns would not have put Peter in prison, for he was his best workman; he only said this so he could get the mill.

A wagon was at once sent to Peter's cottage, and the mill put into it and driven away. The mill in itself was not of much value, but as it was the best thing the poor family owned, it was a great treasure to them. The wife and children cried and were much distressed, therefore, when the mill was taken away.

Stingy-Måns had the mill set up in a store and gave out word that the folks around should have the privilege of using it, just as before, by paying a trifle. But first he wished to grind some corn for himself.

Even in Stingy-Måns' dwelling there was a hobgoblin to be found, but as the master of the house was wicked, the hobgoblin did all he could to annoy and trouble him. So when the grinding began, he threw sticks and dirt into the meal, and it turned out to be a very poor quality indeed.

When Stingy-Måns tasted of the porridge, it was as if he had swallowed shoe-pegs, it tore his throat so, and a big stick got caught in his tongue, so he was obliged to go to the doctor to have it taken out, and that cost money.

The meal of the neighbors was just as bad, so they stopped using the mill; the hobgoblin was to blame for that.

But Peter worked and suffered as before; they were just as poor in the little cottage, and, in fact, a great deal more so. And the little hobgoblin thought and pondered on how he should be able to do something for his friends.

One evening Peter's wife found a hen right beside the road, which some hawk had probably caught and then dropped, because it was much bruised and bleeding. It was taken into the cottage and laid on a bit of straw in a corner; they hardly thought it would live till morning, it was so badly hurt.

But in the night the hobgoblin came out and spread salve on the bruises, so that the next day the hen was perfectly well again. As it was impossible to learn anything of the owner, the hen was allowed to remain in the cottage.

But it was no ordinary hen; she could lay eggs and crow, and do both better than half a dozen common hens and roosters could have done. As soon as the clock struck four in the morning, she called out, "Kukkeliku!" so that every one in the house awoke and went joyfully to work.

And so the hen laid eggs, not one, but two, and sometimes three a day, and the city folks gladly paid twice as much for them as for ordinary eggs, because they were so large and choice. Yes, it seemed as if a real blessing had fallen upon the house, in the hen.

The fame of the wonderful bird spread over the whole parish and even came to the ears of Stingy-Måns. He thought at once that it was altogether too much for poor Peter to own such a rare fowl; so he took the hen away from the poor family, under the pretext that it picked the grain out of his fields. But this was a falsehood, because the hen was a well-bred and gentle creature and never did anything naughty. But the hen was put into Stingy-Måns' hen-house.

In the morning, when the maid servant went to feed the hens, there lay the whole twenty together with the rooster, with their necks wrung; only Peter's hen remained sitting on the roost.

Then Stingy-Måns thought perhaps he had done wrong to Peter, but he put that thought immediately out of his mind, and the hen was put in with the ducks and geese.

Next morning the goose-house presented the same appearance as the hen-house the day before; all, both the ducks and geese, lay dead on the floor.

Stingy-Måns now knew perfectly well that it was a punishment to him for doing wrong, but it was so hard to change that he would not think of it at all. He did not dare to keep the hen, so he had her killed and fried and he ate her up for supper, then went to bed and believed the hen could never do any more harm.

But the hen was large and fat, and Stingy-Måns could not bear such strong food. He waked up, therefore, in the middle of the night and was terribly frightened when he heard the dead hen crow and cry, "Kukkeliku! Peter's mill!"

He was really terrified and thought the hen sat under the bed, but it was worse than that; the hen that he had eaten up had come to life, tore him with her claws and sat with her head in his throat, crying incessantly, "Kukkeliku! Peter's mill!"

"I will take some brandy," thought Stingy-Måns, "and I shall feel better." But instead of getting better, he grew worse. Stingy-Måns dressed himself and rushed out over the rocky hills, his hair standing on end, but that did not help him any more than the brandy. Nowhere did he find rest, and he thought Peter's hen had a brood of chickens, into the bargain, because he heard a whole flock of crowing hens. One cried, "Kukkeliku! Johan's cow!" another cried, "Kukkeliku! Lasse's pig!" and so on, all reminding him of some wrong thing he had done.

Well, he came near going insane, because he found no rest, neither night nor day. At last he decided to go to the minister's and get his advice, because the minister ought to be a very wise man. And the minister talked a long time with Måns. I am not perfectly sure of what he said, but when Måns came home he sent for Peter, begged his forgiveness and gave him a cow and a hundred *riksdaler*. Yes, this is as true as the living day!

And then he sent for all the laborers who were owing him money, and raised their pay! And Måns became at once like another man, so kind and helpful towards the poor, and was no longer overbearing.

As soon as Måns began to do good, the hen stopped crowing in his throat, and he became calmer in mind. Indeed it was a wonderful change that took place in him in so short a time!

And in Peter's cottage there was great rejoicing when he came home with the money. All the children, the wife and Peter himself, had new clothes, so they looked very neat on Sunday when they went to church, and the hobgoblin kept his eyes open and took some small bits and made himself a new cap, because he thought the family could afford it now.

And the people's prosperity increased and Peter was more cheerful even than before and always helpful to those more needy than himself. His children are now grown up and work on the neighboring estates. On Sundays they come home for a visit, when their happiness fills the cottage to the roof.

At night the hobgoblin dances on the floor, and the tassel on his pointed cap hops up and down, but no one can hear him, he is so light of foot.

Our story is ended, but Peter and Måns live on.

THE FOREST TREES.

SUMMER was over. The mists began to exhale from the marshes, and the autumn wind swept over field and forest. The birds sought shelter among the branches or flew to warmer climes, for they knew that a cold and severe time was coming.

Out in the forest sat a little bird on a branch; he could not fly away, because his wings were wounded. He beseeched the birch: "Dear birch, let me hide myself among your green leaves, because the autumn wind blows so cold, so cold!"

But the birch answered: "That you cannot do, because you might injure my buds, and ruin my fine attire; away with you!"

So the little creature, shivering with cold, hopped to the strong oak and begged:

"Dear oak, let me hide among your green branches and leaves, because I shiver so much, so much!"

But the oak answered: "Away with you! You might steal some of my acorns, and soil my spotless garments. You cannot stay with me!"

Then the poor bird hopped to the willow beside the brook and said: "Kind willow, let me creep in among your leaves or I shall die of cold."

But the willow answered: "I do not know you, and besides, I am afraid for my garments. What would the other trees think if they should see me conversing with one so poor and wretched looking as you?"

Thus the little bird went to all the leafy trees in the forest and begged for shelter, but none would protect him, and he came near dying with cold. At last he came to the place where the spruce, pine and juniper stood, but he could not speak then, for he was nearly frozen.

When the spruce caught sight of the poor little thing it said: "Come here to me, you poor little bird, and you shall warm yourself! Come under my branches, they are soft and warm!"

The pine said: "I have not such thick branches as my sister, the spruce, but I shall stand here and defy the north wind, so that he cannot harm you, poor little bird!"

And the pine stretched out its tall limbs and helped the spruce to protect the forlorn little one.

The juniper said: "I am small and humble, but when you are hungry, come to me, because I have good, soft berries, and you shall have them so freely, so freely!"

And thus the wounded bird received food and shelter from the warm-hearted trees.

But night came on with frost and storm, and in the morning the leaf trees' green attire lay on the ground, ruined, and the autumn wind shook their naked branches; but the evergreen trees that had shown kindness and given shelter to the poor defenseless little bird, stood there just as green and beautiful as ever. For no winter cold could rob them of their magnificent robes.

THE ANGEL OF THE FLOWERS.

Like a bird's nest concealed among spreading birches and alders, lay the cottage in which little Frida lived. Flowers of many and various kinds grew and blossomed around it, and these were the child's playmates and her best friends. She had none other, because it was seldom any one visited the poor widow — her mother.

And so the flowers became dearer to Frida than they otherwise would have been, perhaps.

From early spring until late fall she devoted every leisure moment to her perfumed friends whom she loved so well.

She delighted in their beautiful color, she breathed in their sweet perfume, and talked to them as if they were little children, which indeed the flowers really are. Of course they could not talk to her, but when the wind sighed among the green trees, they nodded their small heads towards her, and little Frida understood the nodding perfectly well. It meant: "Good day, good day! we like you so much!"

But you must not think that Frida forgot her mother for the flowers, for she was a tender little daughter and did all that an eight-year-old girl could do, to lighten her cares. If by her efforts and industry she succeeded in calling a smile of pleasure to her mother's face, the little Frida was fully rewarded. At such times she would run smilingly about among her flowers, nod to them, and tell them how happy she felt!

But to-day Frida was not cheerful. She stood among her favorites with tear-filled eyes, and sob after sob rose from her breast. Then she thought that all at once the flowers shed a more agreeable fragrance than they had ever done before, and also that they bowed their heads lower.

Frida looked around, astonished, when lo! there stood by her side a girl with rosy cheeks and clear blue eyes, and on her golden locks she wore a wreath of forget-me-nots. Her dress was as white as the petals of a lily, and in one hand she carried some newly blossomed lilies of the valley. She was smaller than Frida, and seemed more delicate.

"Why are you so sad, my little sister?" she asked, throwing her arms about Frida's neck. The stranger's voice sounded friendly, and as mild as a soft flute.

"Oh, if you only knew how sorrowful we are," replied little Frida. "Mamma is sick, and we have no money to buy medicines!"

"Do not grieve, little sister," said the stranger, "because God will surely help you; I know that you have asked him. But have you no friends to whom you can go?"

"No," replied Frida, "we know no one — not one who would help us."

"Well," added the other, "you love flowers very much; they are your good friends and will surely help you."

"Oh! how can they help us?" cried Frida.

"Come with me," said the stranger, and she led Frida out among the flowers. She began to pluck and bind them together in small bunches, which she held out to Frida. Such beautiful nosegays Frida had never before seen! They were so tastefully arranged that each flower's beauty added to that of the others; even the plain, grayish cotton weed looked pretty among its more richly dressed sisters.

And did they not smell sweetly — the small wild flowers! Frida had never seen anything more lovely or smelled sweeter odors; she gazed entranced on the nosegays, which she collected in her apron.

"Now, my little sister, you have what you need," said the stranger. "Send them into the city to be sold, and you will have money. Come here again to-morrow, that I may hear how you have succeeded," and pressing a kiss on Frida's forehead, she vanished before the little girl could thank her.

A good woman of the neighborhood took the nosegays with her to the city. Every one strove to buy one, because they had never before seen anything so lovely. The money the flowers brought was sufficient to provide medicine and other things that were necessary for the sick one at home.

And little Frida was so happy, so happy! She ran about among the flowers, as blithe as a bird in spring, to see if her little benefactress of the day before would appear again. And there on a green tuft stood the stranger maiden, dressed as before. As Frida drew near, she floated so lightly to meet her, that the flowers which she touched did not bend under her feet.

"Sister, sister," said she, and threw her little arms around Frida's neck, "do you see that God has helped you through your little friends, the flowers?"

"Yes; and I am so happy!" said little Frida, "and I thank you, dear, kind maiden, for being so good to me; without you I surely could not have done anything. Come with me to see mamma, that she, too, may thank you, for she would gladly do so."

The stranger smiled, like a newly blown rose, when it greets the sun's rays for the first time.

"I cannot go with you," she said, "because in a few minutes I must be far, far away from here; but greet your mother from the little maiden that guards the flowers. Perhaps you will never see me again; but I shall often be at your side, invisible."

"No, no! do not leave me," begged Frida, with tears in her eyes, throwing her arms tightly around the slender body of her little friend. "Do not leave me, for you are so kind, and I love you so much; I shall be sad, so sad, if you do not come again."

"Do not cry, beloved sister," said the unknown one, and her tender blue eyes beamed with a heavenly light, "do not cry! When the spring sun smiles and the drifts melt, when the hepatica uplifts its little head from the mossy turf, then I shall return, and each day, as long as summer lasts, I shall visit the flowers and you; when they nod to you, when their fragrance is wafted around you, it is a greeting from me, standing invisible by your side, for I am the Angel of the Flowers."

Saying this, she pressed a warm kiss on Frida's lips, and vanished, though no one could tell where. But the wind sighed softly in the lilac bushes, and the branches bowed as they had never done before; the flowers drooped their heads to the earth, and sent out their perfume, as they do only when the Angel of the Flowers passes over them.

THE OLD WOMAN WHO WANTED IT FINE IN THE COT.

THERE was once an old man and an old woman, who were very poor — and many are like that; but they fell heirs to several hundred *riksdaler* — and not many are like that.

So they bought a cottage in another parish, where nobody knew how they had lived before; and then they gave a party, to which they invited the bell-ringer and even the minister himself.

"We must live according to our position now," said the old woman, and the old man repeated her words, for he always said just what his wife did.

They bought all sorts of fine things in the city, and baked cakes at home, which were yellow with saffron, and had raisins on top. All this made a deep hole in the purse, as the saying is, "but nothing venture, nothing have," thought they, and so it was done.

The cottage floor was scoured, the chairs were scoured, the windows were scoured — yes, even the old man's face was scoured, till he looked as fine and shining as an old-fashioned five *öre* piece. Then they broke up twigs and strewed on the floor of the cottage, and everything was made fine for the party.

In the pantry and in the big cupboard stood the food, but I am compelled to say it was not so fine in there. "No one can see how it looks in here, and so it can be left anyhow," said the old woman.

On the top shelf stood a jar full of dishwater, and a preserve jug. These were as like as two brothers; as indeed they were, for they had come from the pottery at the same time, and were as like as two peas in a pod.

On the shelf underneath, there were a fried fish, an unscoured kettle and a dustpan. Underneath were a cream pitcher, a broom and a milk pail. And so it was everywhere.

But the dishes and food were far from pleased at this disorder; one should do them the justice to say this, because each one knew its place perfectly well, and that is knowledge worthy of respect.

"I have had to breathe so much dust that I shall surely get cold and go into consumption," said the milk-pail, looking as sour as possible

"That is a hint to me, of course," said the broom; "but I wish to let you know that I never strove to get this place. I am married to the dustpan, and you shall see that we can make a place in the corner, where we can be by ourselves." The broom trembled, being very much excited, making more dust yet.

"I am nearly ready to burst with indignation," said the preserve jug. "Here I stand beside a common jar of dishwater, as if I were no better myself."

"Yes, that is well said," replied the jar. "I also am as near breaking with anger as can be; but if I should break in two I might make trouble for the rest of you, so I will hold together a while longer."

"Break! Do not restrain yourself for my sake," said the fried fish; "water and I have been friends since my earliest childhood, and I should not object to a bath now."

"No, by all means do not break!" cried the dustpan; "if I should get wet, I should rust, and then the broom would not like me any longer."

"It is abominable," said a kettle ring, "that it should look so here. Out in the kitchen everything is as fine and clean as a tidy girl's doll house."

"They scorn us," said the coffee-pot; "but if you are willing we will be revenged," added he.

"Yes, yes," cried the whole company in chorus, and the coffee-pot took the lead, having the hottest temper as can be seen by his boiling over easily.

Then there was a long consultation, but it was carried on so silently that no one could hear it;

but that something important was going on was plainly to be seen.

A little mouse which ran into the pantry was sent with a message to the cupboard. If her mission succeeded — the preserve jar promised — she was to be allowed to eat as much preserve as she chose and then carry some home to the mice children.

When the old woman glanced in, everything wore its usual expression, so she did not suspect there was anything going wrong. But all this happened in the morning, and the party was not to take place until noon.

When the clock struck twelve, the bell-ringer's wagon was seen on the road; then came the minister, and others who had been invited. The old woman curtesied and the old man bowed and scraped.

The table was spread, and looked fine, and the guests prepared to sit down to it. But just at that moment the door of the pantry and the door of the cupboard flew open with such a loud noise that every one turned to learn the cause of it, and by so doing saw how disorderly it was within.

Pitchers, pans, kettles, broom, in a word, everything there was inside, hopped down on the floor and into the room, to the great astonishment of all present. Then the jug of dishwater began to dance, and all the other things danced after. The coffee-pot stationed itself in the middle of the table and sang:

Dish pans, pickle jars, brooms and milk pails, such a sight!
Such disorder, such disorder, drives one distracted quite!
Purutterut! Purutterut!"

The guests had never seen or heard anything like it before, so they sprang to the door in great terror, and rushed home. But the old man and old woman were forced to join in the dancing, and as they danced, the bank notes flew out of their pockets, and through the windows, so the old folks became poor again.

And that is the reason this story is no longer.

THE LITTLE SPARROW.

One day, late in the fall, a little sparrow sat all alone on a tree outside of my window. He was born late in the summer, and the tiny nest under the eaves was his childhood's home. He did not know what winter had in store for him, because he had never heard any one talk about it.

A flock of swallows sailed past. They stopped and spoke to the little sparrow.

"Shall you not go with us, little sparrow, to the southern lands?"

The sparrow gazed at them in surprise.

"Here I was born," said he, "here I first looked into my mother's eyes, and here in the garden I learned to fly. How could I leave this place? I should die of grief in that strange land."

"Oh! you would not die there," said the swallows. "It is so splendid and beautiful there, that you would soon forget this cold land. The skies there are so blue, the earth so green, the brooks and lakes so clear and the sun shines so warm and soft. But the winter will soon be here; the water will freeze to ice, the ground will be covered with snow, and the trees will be bare and leafless. The north wind will blow so cold, and you will not be able to find any food. You will die of cold and hunger."

But the little sparrow still sat there.

"Way off there in the foreign land the sun may be warm and the earth rich," said he, "and perhaps I shall die here of hunger. But even if I should, I had rather stay in my native land, than live in luxury there."

But a little white bird came from heaven, and seated itself beside the sparrow and twittered:

"Do not be afraid, little sparrow. God will care for those who love their native land so tenderly, because without his knowledge, not a single little bird can fall to the earth."

A TRUE STORY.

Uncle Stefan was very popular among the children, because he could tell stories by the score — and even more; and who does not like any one who can do that? Every one does, of course, and that is why "the dear uncle" was so beloved.

One day — it was the sixth of June, 1883 — Uncle Stefan was away visiting a friend. He was sitting looking into a book which lay on the table. The book was full of stories and tales and pictures, and as he read he smiled kindly, as only good elderly people can smile.

In the first place, the stories were written for children, but they pleased Uncle also, for he was young at heart, so he discovered something at the root of the story, which rewarded both old and young readers; and a perfect story should always be of this kind. The tales in the little book were just such, for it was a genuine child's book.

But after Uncle had read a little while, he glanced at the first page in the book, and there stood the picture of a man, and a great one, too;

it was a portrait which Uncle recognized perfectly —an old boyhood's friend.

The man whom it represented looked serious and he could really be so when it was necessary. But if one looked at his eyes, one could see instantly that he must be gentle and kind-hearted to all. Uncle knew, and many, many knew that he was so, and for this reason he was deeply beloved.

After Uncle had looked a little while, he exclaimed: "Yes, to be sure, to-day exactly! Nine and seventy years!" And Uncle smiled so pleasantly.

"What is it, Uncle? What is seventy-nine years?" cried the children, gathering around him.

Uncle shut the book and laid it on the shelf, where it had nine small sisters in just the same kind of dress.

"Now I shall tell you a little true story," said he. They all listened; little Anna climbed up on his knee, which was easy enough, for Uncle helped her. Then he began:

"In the forest, where all the birds live, the thing I am going to tell you about, happened. The great spotted woodpecker hops up and down on the trees there, and chops very busily with his bill. He is the birds' carpenter and has to make houses for a great many of them, so he is obliged to work from morning till night. The crow hops on the ground and wanders back and forth on the turf; he is the birds' tiller of the land, and when he cries '*Krah, krah!*' along towards evening it means that the earth needs rain, and the crow understands that better than any farmer who has been in an agricultural school.

"The owl is the night police and keeps a strict eye on the rats and mice, so they cannot ruin this and that. The falcons and hawks are the warriors. They are stately looking, and have crooked bills, just like noses on distinguished generals. And so each bird has his occupation.

"What do you think, then, the song birds have to do? Ah! they have their part, too. They have to cheer up the other birds so their work will go easier; they remind them of the earth's beauty, of the heaven's splendor and of God's goodness. If they should not receive such a reminder often, they would forget what they ought to remember first of all, and their hearts would become as hard as the trees at which the woodpecker chops. Do you not believe now that the song-birds are useful?

"Out there in the green forest, many a bird has sung so beautifully that the whole region around has listened to his song. The woodpecker cried, '*Plitt, plitt!*' the crow screamed, '*Rah, rah!*' and the magpie laughed with all its might; this all meant that they were pleased with the grand songs.

"But in the nests, on the branches, sat many little birdlings. They also wished to hear something fine, and so stretched out their small necks; but they could not understand what the birds up there sang, because it was so grand, and the trills were too artistic for them. Then they drooped their heads and were grieved.

"But there was one of the birds singing up in the sky, who thought it was a great pity about the little ones, for this bird had a very kind heart. So he thought, 'I will fly down and sing for them; perhaps that will please the little ones.'

"And he did so.

"'Oh! what was that?' asked the little young things, and lifted up their heads so they could hear better.

"'Oh! how lovely! oh! how lovely!' twittered all of them.

"'I understand that just as well as what mamma says to me,' said one.

"It was in Love's language that the bird sang to them; that language always reaches the heart, and it is so easily understood; but there are very few who can speak it.

"And the song-bird continued for ten years to cheer and guide the tender ones, and he sowed many seeds (which in time sank and bore fruit) into these hearts, and God will reward him for it. And he has already received a reward — the best that earth can offer: he is heartily beloved by the little ones. When they grew up the love remained in their hearts; and how could they forget him? He never forgot them for the great, whose approval he also received in rich measure.

"'But how can you make yourself so well understood by the little ones? How is it that what you sing gives them so much pleasure?' asked some of the one who loved the young creatures so much.

"'Their joy is mine,' replied he; 'that is the whole secret.'

"That is certainly very simple, but there are very few who understand the matter. That is love's secret, which comes not only from the head, but from the heart."

Uncle Stefan paused an instant.

"Is that the end of the story, Uncle?" asked the children, almost in the same breath.

"The allegory is ended, but not my story," he replied.

"Uncle, then you do not mean that they were real birds?" said Elna, the eldest, and looked questioningly at the aged man.

"You guessed right that time," said he.

"By birds you meant people, Uncle," said Karl.

"Right, my boy; but if birds mean people, what do the little birdlings mean?"

"Still, still, all of you, I wish to tell that," said Elna.

"No, no; let me tell it," cried all but little Anna, who sat on Uncle's knee; she was barely five years old, and could not think so quickly as the rest.

"No; little Anna must think that out," said Uncle Stefan. "Who would the birdlings be, if birds were people?"

"Birdlings, Uncle, must be children," said the little one, after a moment's thought.

"Oh! to think Anna, who is so little, can think that out," said Karl triumphantly; he was nine years old, and a tall fellow for his age.

"And singing birds — they are writers and those who help others to live, and improve the minds of their fellowmen. But now you must tell me who it is among our writers that the children like so much," continued Uncle.

"O, Uncle, Uncle, I can tell that! I can tell that!" cried both the elder ones, and were very anxious to tell.

"I can tell it, too," said Karl, who was also sure of his answer.

"Well, but little Anna, then?" asked Uncle.

"Surely Anna remembers who wrote the story I read to her?" said Elna.

"Yes, yes," cried the little one, "I can say it. May I say it, Uncle — dear Uncle?"

"All say it together," said Uncle Stefan.

"Uncle Adam!" cried out four joyous voices at once.

"Yes, children, it is Uncle Adam — Carl Anton Wetterbergh — that I tried to picture to you in the allegory. When I was reading just now, in his charming children's paper, 'Linnea,' whose volumes for ten years lie up there, I saw his portrait, and then I remembered that he will be seventy-nine years old to-day, because he was born on the sixth of June, 1804. He was the first to start a child's paper for the youth of our land, and no one in our country has understood so well how to talk to them.

"When you have read the rest of his writings, you will have the strongest reason to love him. May he live many years to enjoy the great affection he has won, and reap the harvest of what he has sown." *

Then there was something moist shining in the eyes of Uncle and the two eldest children, and little Anna threw her arms around his neck and said:

"O, Uncle! I do love Uncle Adam so much!"

* Since deceased.

THE BIRD'S CHOICE.

HIGH up on the top of a leafy linden sat a little bird, singing enchanting melodies. And the singing sounded so silvery and beautiful, that all the flowers in the garden lifted their shining heads to listen.

"It is to me he sings," said the haughty, showy tulip, and let its leaves shimmer in the sunlight. "And how could it be for any one else? I am surely the most beautiful of all the flowers of the garden!"

"You vain creature!" said the swelling peony, shaking its great, dark-red head. "As if I could not hear that it is I of whom he sings!"

"You do not seem to know that there are other flowers more beautiful still here in the beds," said the aster, and tossed her little head. "But we shall see when he comes down where he will tarry," she continued, shaking the dust from her petals.

"How the pitiful things prate," said the fine dahlia. "As though every one did not know that beauty's prize is mine!"

And so spoke the daisy and the wild rose, and all the flowers of the garden; each one of them considered itself to be the object of the bird's song.

But now the little songster flew down and spread his wings over the flowers and sang more beautifully than ever.

"He is coming to me, he is coming to me," thought each one.

And the bird sank nearer, but not to the proud glowing ones in the flower-beds, but to the little dewdrop that stood in a corner of the garden. And the songster looked enchanted at the simple plant, which shyly drooped its small flowers to the ground.

But why does the songster tarry with her? Ah! in every one of her leaves there is a gleaming pearl hidden — a clear drop of dew — in whose bosom the pure and splendid arch of heaven is mirrored; and so the bird chose this modest flower before all the others which were so gaily dressed.

When the little warbler becomes tired and dejected after the day's trials and griefs, he flies down to the flower which hides the pure, heaven-reflecting dew-pearl in its bosom, and then he becomes refreshed and happy, and his tones ring out exultingly once more.

THE RARE PORRIDGE.

There was once a woman who was very, very poor, but she would not beg.

In order to live, she bound together fagots from the forest and sold them in the city; but that was not enough, because she could not earn money to buy bread for herself and the two children she had.

"No, that will not do," she thought, and so she tried to think of something else. "I will pick flowers and make them into nosegays; they will surely buy them," she thought.

So she gathered lilies of the valley, may flowers, yellow cowslips and many other pretty flowers, and made them into bunches.

But when she came to the city with them, every one thought they were too common. "They are only wild flowers," said they, "and what does one want with such rubbish when there are fine garden flowers to be had?" And so no one would buy them.

The poor woman did not know what she should do, for she had no food for her children. Then she went into a doorway where she thought no one would see her standing in the corner, and began to cry.

An earl lived in the house, in the doorway of which she stood. He was the most distinguished man in the whole city, and was good and kind besides. Just as he was going out he saw the woman and said:

"Why do you cry, little mother?"

Then the woman told him how badly things were at home, and that she did not know any living way to get food for herself and her children.

"Have you nothing at all to give them when you come home?" he asked.

No; she had not a crumb in the house besides some coarse groats that had been given her for a pig, if she ever could afford one; but as she had never been able to get one, she had the groats still.

"But that will not do for porridge," said she, beginning to cry again.

The earl reflected awhile and then said: "Do not be down-hearted, little mother; I know of a way. I will buy the porridge, and here is the money for it. When you get home take pure spring water and make porridge of the groats and bring it here, and you shall hear more from me."

The woman was very happy, as you can easily understand, and the children too, and the day after she went to the city with the porridge which the earl had bought.

"When people come and wish to buy porridge like this, do not take less than a *riksdaler* a pound for it," said the earl, and the woman promised.

"But is he not stupid to buy such dry sticks?" said she, which was not just right after all the kind earl had done, but the woman did not know any better, and she was very grateful in spite of what she said.

That evening the earl gave a grand reception; when all the guests had taken refreshment according to their rank and position, as is the custom in the city, a large silver tray was brought in and on it was the porridge the poor woman had made with whipped cream around it.

"Now, my friends, you shall partake of something rare, which you have never before eaten," said the earl, and each one helped himself to the porridge.

"Is it not wonderful?" asked the earl.

"Yes, it is extraordinarily good;" "it has such a fine flavor;" "what kind of delicious dish is it?" sounded from all, and they ate to their heart's content, although it was only coarse porridge, as you well know.

"Have you ever tasted anything like it?" whispered one to another. No, no one had. The earl!

the earl! he always had everything so wonderfully rare.

"Who discovered this dish?" asked one of the company.

"Ah!" said the earl, "I did so; but there is only one person who can prepare it so it will be right; and that is a woman out in Brotorpet. She only charges a *riksdaler* a pound, and that is certainly enormously cheap!"

Yes, all agreed to that; there could not be two opinions about it.

The next day orders for porridge came from all directions to the poor woman, because every one wished to have food like the earl's, for that was something to have. And the woman earned so much money that she was put on her feet again, as we say, and the porridge became famous round about.

One day in summer, some people were out driving, and as they drew near the cottage where the woman lived, they became hungry. So one of them proposed that they should seize the opportunity to taste of the famous porridge.

The proposition was received with great applause, as one can readily understand, so all were soon sitting around a large dish, containing the rarity.

When the woman came out to take the pay for it, one of the company asked her:—

"But how can you make such a rare dish?"

"Well, I think people are crazy about that porridge," said the woman; "it is made of nothing but groats and water. But if it tastes so good to them, they are perfectly welcome to it. Will you have a little more?"

The whole company looked at each other, and all looked a little confused, too, but no one wished for any more, because now the flavor of groats became so strong.

I do not know whether any one bought porridge afterwards, but it was all the same to the woman, because she had already got money enough to make her comfortable.

THE STORY OF UNCLE NISSE.*

UNCLE NISSE did not live in one of the great streets, but far out, in a little cottage which stood on the crags where the belfry was built. Here he had a little chamber with a low window, and a great porcelain stove in one corner. The window might have been a little larger, because the room was very dark; but the stove need not have been so broad, because Uncle Nisse had a lack of wood; yes, he lacked a little of everything except good disposition; and he also had many peculiarities, so they said; but these bring neither food nor clothes.

Sometimes he sat and wrote from sunrise to sunset, and then he read aloud what he had written to the people in the city.

But when the burgomaster — who was considered to be the wisest man, because he held the highest office — heard what Uncle Nisse had thought out and written, he said nothing, but shrugged his shoulders, and that can mean anything whatsoever.

"Yes, that man has his peculiarities," said he, and shook his head; and so the burgomaster's wife shook her head, and all the aldermen and their wives, yes, the whole city did the same, even to lame Truls, who swept the market-place on Saturday evenings.

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* Pronounced Nis-ser.

"Yes, that man has his eccentricities," so they all shrugged their shoulders and smiled scornfully, although most of them had not the slightest hint of what was on Uncle Nisse's paper.

Uncle Nisse stood in his little chamber; he had opened the window and was looking out over the city, far away towards the ocean, where the waves gleamed like gold in the sun's rays. The window was open and the spring breeze — it was in the month of May — crept in and stroked him on his wrinkled cheeks.

"No one in the city has such a view as I have," said he, looking out over the sunlighted harbor; "yes, I stand above them all," said he, and smiled.

Then a piping and a screaming was heard down in the garden below; an organ grinder with his monkey had lost his way and come up on the hill. A crowd of ragged children, most of them boys, had followed them, and the little ape leaped and grinned at them. When it caught sight of Uncle Nisse, it leaped so high and made such a comical grimace that all the boys clapped their hands. Uncle Nisse laughed too, but left the window and seated himself at the table. Then he took a pen and a bit of paper and drew a face on it. It was the monkey's, as plain as daylight, but also very much like the burgomaster's.

Then Uncle Nisse added some more strokes, and it was a portrait of one of the aldermen. The old man amused himself with the drawing for a long time, and soon it was like at least half a score of people in the city.

Uncle Nisse laughed like a school-boy over his trick.

"Truly, one can see now whether you are a man or a monkey," said he, and laughed the more. But all at once he became serious. "It is miserable about human beings, but rather to be wept over than laughed at," he then exclaimed, and two big tears ran down his cheeks and fell on the picture. He threw it from him, and it fell down back of the bureau against the wall, and there it was allowed to stay.

But when autumn drew near and the swallows flew away, Uncle Nisse did not go out any more; he lay sick.

"Open the window," said he, "so that the sun may shine on me, and the wind once more whisper its old tales in my ears."

"How light, oh! how light," said Uncle Nisse, looking up to the heavens; "yes, I am coming."

"Brother looks very happy, very happy, thank

God!" said the aged pastor, who was sitting with Uncle Nisse.

The latter made no reply; he continued to look through the window towards the blue heavens to which his spirit had flown; on his lips a smile still lingered.

"Blessed are they who fall asleep so," said the old pastor.

And Uncle Nisse was buried. The little he had was sold, and it just covered the burial expenses, but that did not cost many dollars.

But the papers on which he had written so many hours were bought by a merchant to wrap around butter and cheese. They had a richer time than ever Uncle Nisse had.

We had called the old man uncle because many in the city called him so, and he really was an uncle, too. He had one brother, who lived in a large city, and had a son and daughter. The brother was a rich man; he had plenty of money, but a great lack of memory, for he scarcely remembered that Nisse existed. When the latter was dead, and a letter came about it, the brother said to his wife:

"Just think! Nisse did not owe any one a penny when he died."

"Is he dead?"

"Yes." And then he was forgotten.

Awhile after — it was a couple of years, or near that — something wonderful appeared in the papers.

A traveler had come to the city where Uncle Nisse had lived. The man was so deeply learned that the king himself often asked his advice.

When he came to the city, he sent to a store for paper, and as a wrapper around it, he got one of the sheets on which Uncle Nisse had written.

He read it and sent quickly to the store again, and bought all there was left of what Uncle Nisse had written.

"Nothing like this is written once in a hundred years, hardly," the learned man said. Yes, that was something extraordinary.

Everybody talked about it; not only those who lived in the little city, but in the whole land.

"Oh! what genius," they said.

And the burgomaster of the city where uncle lived, remembered him so well now.

"That was an uncommon man, that I always maintained," he said. "He was an honor to our city!" Yes, the whole city now remembered him with pride!

And lame Truls showed strangers the way to the cottage where Uncle Nisse lived, and had so many wonderful stories to tell about the dead man, for now they were well treasured.

And then it was decided that a monument should be raised to the "great man," and money was collected.

When the ceremony of raising took place, Uncle

Nisse's brother came to the little city; he thought because he was the nearest relation to the departed, he would be first on this great occasion.

The monument stood high on a mound beside the church, because it could not be placed on the grave, as no one knew exactly where it was that Uncle Nisse had been buried before he became a great man! But they did not allow this to be known, and now to-day, everybody believes that the dead man lies where the shaft was raised.

When the rich brother went into poor uncle's room, he searched for something to take away with him as a memento, for he would have been very glad to have such a thing, but there was nothing to take, because everything was so old and dilapidated. Then he happened to look behind the bureau, and there lay the picture still, that Uncle Nisse had drawn.

"Oh, here is my brother's portrait!" said he, because he was not well informed on such things; and so he saved the picture and took it home with him.

Here he had a frame of real gold made, and put the picture in it, and a fine glass over it.

"That is my brother's portrait," said the rich man to the guests he invited to his reception.

"Oh! ah! indeed! is it so?" was heard on all sides.

"I think it looks like a monkey," said a little girl, who was with her mother at the reception. She said just what she thought, because she did not understand any better; but the remark caused perfect silence.

"Hush, Hedvig," cried the mother.

"It is strange that the same expression can be recognized in every one of our family!" said the rich man, who had not heard the child's remark.

The guests had heard it, however, and so looked at each other smilingly, while they placed themselves at the table.

When they had all turned their backs, the picture laughed, so that every line jumped, but where Uncle Nisse's tears had fallen, it glistened, like great, clear drops, and so it does to this day.

THE KING, THE MILLER, AND THE MILLER'S PÅLLE.[*]

THERE was once a miller who was so immensely rich that no miller before or since has had so much money. But it happened to him as to many another, he became stiff and haughty, so that no more disagreeable person was to be found for a hundred miles around, and that is not stretching the matter a bit, either.

Now he wished everybody to know what sort of a man he chanced to be; so he put out a great sign on the wall, and on the sign was written:

> "Bengt the miller am I,
> And live without care till I die."

One day, when the king drove through that part of the country, he rode past the mill and saw the sign.

"That man I must see," thought the king, and so called out:

"Bengt, the miller, come out!"

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[*] Pronounced Poal-ler.

But the miller was just taking a nap, and at that time of day he was, like many other great men, not very good-tempered if disturbed. He thought it was a peasant who wanted to grind corn, so he did not get up, but turned over so the sofa creaked, and screamed:

"Set your bag in the mill and then keep quiet, for I am going to sleep!"

You can easily believe that the king was not very well satisfied with this answer.

"You shall not live any longer without care, you have my kingly word for that," answered the king, and then drove away so fast that the dust rolled around the wheels in clouds.

Now when the miller heard that, he peeped out; when he saw that a gold crown sat on the wagon roof, and kingly servants stood behind, he got pretty thoroughly waked up.

"Pity me, miserable creature, for behaving so!" cried he, and began to spring backwards and forwards on the floor, and tear his hair.

"I am dreadfully afraid of the king!"

Just as he was jumping about, the sheriff came in, for he had been sent by the king himself. The king had sent a message by him, that if the miller had no trouble, he should come up to the castle on a certain day, and that was only three days distant. At the court the king should put three questions to the miller, which the latter must answer, but if he did not answer correctly it would go very hard with him.

Now Bengt was much alarmed, because he was not quick-witted, and had a hard time when he tried to think. He went around sighing day and night in great anguish, and would have cast himself into the mill pond if the water had not been so cold. When two days had passed in this way, he was four and a half inches smaller round, because he lived without care no longer.

Bengt had several servants in the mill, and one of them was named Pålle. Pålle was thought to be a nobody, because he was small in stature and of few words. So he was not allowed to go into the mill chamber when the rest of the servants were there enjoying themselves, but he sat, when he was not at work, under the great mill-wheel. In this way he had grown to think for himself — because he had no one to talk with — and that is not so bad a thing to be able to do sometimes.

When the miller now came down into the mill, groaning and sighing, Pålle asked what the matter was.

"Oh! poor me, poor me, I am so afraid, so afraid!" said Bengt, and he told the whole story about the king, and what he had commanded.

"Was that all?" asked Pålle. "I will go to the king, if you are willing, and as he never saw you, he will think it is you coming."

It was as if a whole meal sack had been lifted from Bengt's bosom, and he took Pålle in his arms, although he got meal on his best coat. And gold and whole forests he promised to Pålle, if he did the errand to the castle well.

As the next morning drew near, Pålle set out, because it was not on the next farm the king lived. But Pålle had on his every day clothes, because he had no others ; and that was good, for now one could see that he was a miller.

Pålle walked into the king's room perfectly unabashed, and there sat the king on his throne, reigning with all his might. But when he saw Pålle, he believed at once that it was Bengt, the miller, who was coming, so he called him before the throne, and put on the manner which he used in battle, because he wished to frighten the obstinate miller.

First the king pointed with his scepter to the most learned man in his court, and this man strode forward and held a conversation with Pålle in mock Latin only.

The king had talked beforehand with the learned man about it, and it had been decided that the miller should be confused. So the conversation was full of words that were both long and crooked, and much learning was contained in it, also.

Pålle could not understand a single word, of course, but he thought, "a man's a man, for a' that," so when the learned man had finished, Pålle stepped forward, braced himself well on his feet, looked the learned man right in the eyes, and threw out his arms, so that the meal dust flew high in the air, and began:

"Millum mealum stonerum grindum millerum quarnum mjölum stenelarum malum gubbelurum," and rattled off a long string of words and looked very serious. When he had finished, he bowed before the king, the king's wife, all the princes and princesses, precisely as the learned one had done before him.

"Now you shall answer three questions," said the king, "but think well beforehand, because if you do not answer right, it will go worse with you than it ever has yet with a miller in this world. Tell me first, how many grains of sand are there at the bottom of the ocean?"

That was not an easy question, certainly; but Pålle stuck his hands in his pockets, took out a piece of chalk and got down on the floor on all-fours. Then he began to write columns of figures and queer characters, precisely as if he were reckoning up something about the meal bags in the mill.

In a few minutes he rose up and said:

"Seven thousand million million, five hundred and thirty-seven."

"Is that correct?" asked the king.

"Yes," answered Pålle, "and if the company will not believe me, then the gentleman there, who talked so incomprehensibly beautiful, can reckon up and find out if I am right."

"That was surely not so badly solved," said the king, but did not let any one hear it. "Now tell me how far is it between heaven and earth?"

"Well," answered Pålle, "it is only a knee's length."

"How do you make that?" inquired the king.

"Well, God created heaven as his throne, and earth as his foot-stool," answered Pålle.

Now both the king and queen smiled, because they thought that the miller was very quick-witted; but the king would not let him off so easily, so he said:

"Now you must answer the last question, and that is the hardest of all. If you do not answer right this time, it will go badly for you, any way. Take care and answer immediately and say, What am I thinking now?"

And at the same time the king drew out his great sword.

"Well, you think that I am Bengt, the miller, but I am only his servant Pålle, I am."

Then the king was so pleased at Pålle's cleverness, that he and the whole court laughed to their heart's content, and then the king spoke:

"Now you have entertained us all, you shall be allowed to wish what you like, and it shall be granted, if it is in my power to do so."

Then Pålle said, "If that is so, then I beg that my master may stay at home and not have to come here, for he has no court learning."

And the king liked the request so much, that Pålle got a whole ton of money when he left, and so he became well off and married the miller's only daughter, and inherited the mill.

And if you have some corn to grind, you can go there with it, and he will tell you all about this tale himself!

THE STORY OF THE SEED-DOWN.

HIGH above the earth, over land and sea, floated the seed-down, borne on the autumn wind's strong arms.

" Here shall you lie, little seed-down," said he at last, and put it down on the ground, and laid a fallen leaf over it. Then he flew away immediately, because he had much to look after.

That was in the dark evening, and the seed could not see where it was placed, and besides the leaf covered it.

Something heavy came now and pressed so hard that the seed came near being destroyed; but the leaf, weak though it was, protected it. It was a human foot which walked along over the ground and pressed the downy seed into the earth. When the foot was withdrawn, the earth fell and filled the little pit it had made.

The cold came and the snow fell several feet deep; but the seed lay quietly down there, waiting for warmth and light. When the spring came, and the snow melted away, the plant shot up out of the earth.

There was a little gray cottage beside which it grew up. The tiny plant could not see very far around, because rubbish and brush heaps lay near it, and the little window was so gray and dusty, that she could not peep into the cottage either.

"Who lives here?" asked the little thing.

"Don't you know that?" asked the ragged shoe, which lay near. "Why, the smith who drinks so much lives here, and his wife who wore me out."

And then she told how it looked inside, how life went on there, and it was not cheering; no, but fearfully sad. The shoe knew it all well, and told a whole lot in a few minutes, because she had such a well-hung tongue.

Now there came a pair of ragged children, running, the smith's boy and girl; he was six years old and the girl eight, so the shoe said after they were gone.

"Oh! see, what a pretty little plant," said the girl.

"So now, I shall pull it up," said the boy, and the plant trembled to the root's heart.

"No, do not do it," said the girl. "We must let it grow. Do you not see what pretty, crinkly leaves it has? It will have lovely flowers, I know, when it grows bigger."

And it was allowed to stay there. The children took a stick and dug up the earth round about, so it looked like a ploughed field. Then they threw the shoe and the sweepings a little way off, because they thought to make the place look better.

"You cannot think," said the shoe after the children had gone, "you cannot think how in the way folks are!"

"The children have to give themselves airs and pretend to be very orderly," said the half of a coffee cup, and she broke in another place, she was so disturbed.

But the sun shone warmly and the rain filtered down in the upturned earth. Then leaf after leaf unfolded and in a few days the plant was several inches high.

"Oh! see," said the children, who came again; "see how beautiful it is getting!"

"Come, father, come! brother and I have discovered such a pretty plant! Come and see it!" begged the girl.

The father glanced at it. The plant looked so lovely on the little rough bit of soil which lay between the piles of sweepings.

The smith nodded to the children.

"It looks very disorderly here," he said to himself, and stopped an instant. "Yes, indeed, it does!" He went along, but thought of the little green spot, with the lovely plant in the midst of it.

The children ran into the house.

"Mother," said they, "there is such a rare plant growing right by the window!"

The mother wished to glance out, but the window was so thick with dust that she could not do so. She wiped off a little spot.

"Ousch!" said she when she noticed how badly the window looked beside the cleaned spot; so she wiped the whole window.

"That is an odd plant," said she, looking at it. "But how dreadfully dirty it is out in the yard!"

Now that the sun shone in through the window it became very light in the cottage. The mother looked at the ragged children that stood by the window, at the floor, and at the rubbish in the room, and the blood rushed over her pale cheeks.

"It is a perfect shame," she murmured. "I have never noticed that it was so untidy here."

She hurried around and set the room to rights, and when that was done, she washed the dirty floor. She scrubbed it so hard that her hands smarted as if she had burned them in the fire; she did not stop until every spot was white.

It was evening; the husband came home from work. The wife sat mending the girl's ragged dress. The man stopped in the door. It looked so strange to him within, and the look his wife gave him was brighter than ever before, he thought.

"Go — God's peace!" he stammered. It was a long time since such a greeting had been heard in here.

"God's peace!" answered she; "wel — welcome home!" She had not said this for many years.

The smith stepped forward to the window; on the bed beside it the two children lay sleeping. He looked at them, then he looked out on the mound where the little plant stood. After a few minutes he went out.

A deep sigh rose from the woman's breast. She had hoped that he would stay at home that evening. Two great tears fell on the little dress.

In a few minutes she heard a noise outside. She went to the window to see what it could be. Her husband had not gone away! He was out in the yard, clearing up the brush heaps and rubbish.

She became more happy than she had been for a long time. He glanced in through the window and saw her. Then she nodded; he nodded back, and then they both smiled.

"Be careful, above all, of the little plant!" said she.

Warm and sunny days came. The smith stayed at home now every evening. It was green and lovely round the little cottage, and outside the window there was a whole flower bed, with many blossoms; but in the midst stood the little plant the autumn wind had brought thither.

The smith's family stood around the flower beds and talked about the flowers.

"But the plant brother and I found is the most beautiful of them all," said the little girl.

"Yes, indeed, it is," said the parents.

The smith bent down and took one of the leaves in his hand, but very carefully, because he was afraid he might hurt it with his thick, coarse fingers.

Then a bell was heard ringing in the distance. The sound floated out over field and lake and rang so peacefully in the eventide, just as the sun sank behind the tree-tops in the forest. And every one bowed the head, because it was Saturday evening, and it was a sacred voice that sounded.

In a little while all was silent in the cottage; the inmates slumbered, more tired, perhaps, than before, after the week's toils, but also much, much happier. And round about all was calm and peaceful. The wind was sleeping in the tree tops, the waves had gone to sleep among the rocks on the beach — all nature reposed; only the cradle song of the corn-crake and cricket was still heard.

But when Sunday's sun came up, the plant opened its bud, and it bore but a single one. When the cottage folks passed the little flower garden, they all stopped and looked at the beautiful, fragrant blossom.

"It shall go with us to the house of God," said the wife, turning to her husband. He nodded, and then she broke off the flower. The wife looked at the husband, and he looked at her, and then their eyes rested on both children; then their eyes grew dim, but became immediately bright again, for the tears were not of sorrow, but of happiness.

When the organ's tones swelled and the people sang in the temple, the flower folded its petals, for it had fulfilled its mission, but on the waves of song its perfume floated upwards. And in the sweet fragrance lay a warm thanksgiving from the little seed-down.

THE LITTLE BIRCH-TREE.

WAY out by the sea, on a rocky cliff, where the wind swept away the earth and moss from the rifts and chasms, and the salt water was dashed foaming against the sky, there stood a cold, bare rock. Rough and uneven, without a blade of green grass on it, stood the bare, inhospitable cliff, a picture of that hopeless poverty, which having nothing and hoping nothing, becomes as hard as flint.

But, however it happened, a birch seed came and rested in one of the rifts of the rock. It was of the right sort, because it struck root and grew, although it had nothing but the salt spray to live on.

" I shall try to clothe the cliff in green," thought the plant, and stretched two small, thin leaves up towards the sky. But then came the storm and cold, and the two leaves fell off and sank in the cleft close by. The following year two new leaves were sent out, but those met with the same fate.

" What good does it do to send out leaves? You cannot grow on the rocks there," said a sea gull, who was sailing about among the clouds and saw everything from his lofty position.

But the birch did not listen. Every spring it strove upwards with its little shrunken stem towards heaven, full of newly-awakened hope; but as soon as a few months had passed by, the small pale green leaves fell and sank down in the cleft, because the cliff afforded such scanty nourishment. So it went on, year in and year out, till the birch's days were over. The sap in the little stem dried up, the tender buds fell off, and the spirit prepared to fly towards the heavens, on which it had always gazed.

Then the sound of a bird's song was heard close by, bees hummed and the fragrance of leaves and flowers was on the air. In the little cleft stood a fresh, strong twig, bearing leaves full of sap, and round about grew flowers and grass, and soft turf was spreading over the hard, stony cliff.

"Whence cometh all this?" asked the little birch, its weak voice trembling with joy.

"It is the small leaves thou hast given, which have prepared the way for greenness and life," replied a little white dove. "Come now with me!" And borne upon her wings, the spirit of the little birch soared upward until it reached the clear heavens.

But the rocky cliff became a beautiful island, clothed with soft grass, fragrant flowers and leafy trees.

But yet the little birch had only a pair of small leaves to give!

MOTHER MAJA-STINA'S JACKET.

There was not a better person to be found in the whole township than Mother Maja-Stina. She never talked badly about people, like some who waste their time over such gossip, and she never grumbled or quarreled with her neighbors, either. When she had nothing else to do, she took up her knitting work and knit so fast, it was pleasant to watch her.

Because she was so good she was always welcome in every cottage, and the coffee pot bubbled in its most lively manner when it boiled for Mother Maja-Stina; for you must know that such a pot is not so stupid as some may think.

It knows when it is put on the fire, whether the coffee is to be drunk with sugar and dipped only, or if people's good name and reputation shall accompany the dipping; the coffee pot does not like scandal, at least not before it has lived a long time in bad company.

Mother Maja-Stina lived in a cottage of her own, for indeed the old woman was not without some means, I must let you know. She had everything so nice and neat here, of course, with lace curtains and geraniums in the windows, and spruce boughs in front of the steps, so that people should wipe their feet before they came in.

And she always dressed neatly and well, and when she went to church on Sundays she was quite fine because she could afford it, as she made her own clothes.

Now she had had her jacket, I mean her holiday jacket, for many years, so it began to look worn and shiny in the seams. So she thought the holiday jacket was only fit for everyday wear, and that she ought to have a brand fire new one for Sundays. The juryman's wife thought the same and the wife of the bell-ringer, too, and they were the first in the parish to be consulted when it was necessary to have shrewd advice as to what to do. And now when Mother Maja-Stina talked it over with them and several others, it was decided that she should have a new jacket, and it is with that very jacket that this story deals, although it has not appeared till now, but you shall hear about it at once.

Sewing Mari, as she was called, because she went around to the farmhouses sewing, undertook to fit Mother Maja-Stina, cut straight and crossways into the piece of cloth, and pinned and sewed, so it was pleasant to watch her, because she was deft with her fingers, and spry about her work. Still it was very provoking that Sewing Mari sometimes took the measures a little too much so and so, and as a result, her masterpieces did not always fit so well as they might; but as they were usually too large, folks did not say very much, because the people in that locality were not greatly given to vanities and such like.

It went with Mother Maja-Stina's jacket as with scores of other jackets before, which had been executed by Sewing Mari's artistic fingers; it was too long in the skirt, too large around the waist, and the sleeves came a little below the fingers. It would have been better, of course, if it had fitted, but that could not be helped now, and Mother Maja-Stina would not contradict Sewing Mari, who thought everything she did fitted finely, which is apt to be the way with those who sew or do any sort of handwork.

So Sewing Mari received her proper pay and Mother Maja-Stina had a new holiday jacket, and for those who wish to have exact information, I will add, it was finished on Monday evening.

Mother Maja-Stina now went to the neighbors and told how the matter stood; that the jacket was a little too large, "but otherwise it fitted so very well," said Mother Maja-Stina, because she would not put Sewing Mari to shame, do not think for a minute.

But the juryman's wife thought it was a shame for Mother Maja-Stina's jacket to fit so badly, so she told her eldest daughter that she must go to Mother Maja-Stina's cottage, sometime when the old woman did not know it, and cut off the sleeves, take in the waist and cut off the skirt, so it would be right and proper. And the daughter did this, and as she was quick at altering things, she had changed the jacket long before Mother Maja-Stina came home in the evening.

But the good woman did not put on her new jacket every day, because she was not at all vain, so she did not notice that the garment had been changed.

The next day Mother Maja-Stina went to the bell-ringer's, and they came to speak about the new jacket, of course; the woman told them how it fitted, and it was so like Sewing Mari's usual work that no one doubted it. And so the bell-ringer's wife told her eldest daughter that she must go secretly to Mother Maja-Stina's cottage and make the sleeves shorter, the waist tighter and the skirt smaller.

Yes, the daughter knew how to do it, and she sewed and snipped so rapidly that the whole thing was finished long before evening, and Mother Maja-Stina knew nothing about it, of course.

And when night was past Mother Maja-Stina went to another place and the same story was told there. Everybody thought so much of the old woman that all were eager to do something kind for her, so this mother sent her only daughter to make the jacket over, and so it went through the week; each day some kind-hearted woman took in Mother Maja-Stina's jacket, so that by Sunday it had been fixed up five times, as you can reckon up even if you are not an expert at figuring.

Now when Sunday came, Mother Maja-Stina was preparing to go to church; she took down the jacket to put it on, but she could not imagine what was the matter, for now the sleeves only reached to the elbows; furthermore, it lacked three inches of coming together in front, and the bottom hem rested right across her shoulder blades.

At first Mother Maja-Stina thought the cloth had shrunk, but instantly changed her mind, for she was not stupid, and finally she guessed how it had happened.

"Well, sometimes kind and helpful neighbors are worth having," said Mother Maja-Stina, for she was so good-natured and saw plainly that it had been done to help her. So she put the jacket on, just as it was, and went to church.

But the juryman and his wife and daughter, who walked behind her, thought she looked a little singular, as you can imagine.

And so this story is no longer, and it could not well be so, when the jacket was so short.

THE FORGOTTEN ONE.

Many hundred years have flown since the things happened about which I am going to tell you. Then there were stately castles with high walls and towers in the country round about, and brave knights and fair ladies wandered with elegant ease and courteous manners through the castle halls.

When a war challenge came, and such often happened, the knights clad themselves in armor of shining steel, with sword by the side and shield on the arm, and swung themselves up on the proud war horse, which chafed at the bridle till the foam stood white on its mouth, and pawed unceasingly with its well-shod hoofs.

Up flew the castle gates, the drawbridge fell and over that old-time bridge the warrior knights rode out to win fame and honor, while the women and maidens of the citadel waved a farewell to them from the windows in the towers.

In those days there was a noble knight who rode far and wide in Eastern and Western lands, and everywhere he was noted for his courage and his victories. For honor he fought; she was his guiding star and the prize for which he strove. Kings and princes sought his aid when they were at war with each other, and they showed their gratitude for his assistance by gifts of gold.

When he had won so much honor and so much gold that no one round about excelled him, he turned back again to his castle.

But this now looked so small and humble to him that he caused it to be torn down, and on the place where it had stood, he built up another castle worthy of the knightly fame he had won for himself.

Soon its mighty towers rose high over the tops of the forest, and far and near the magnificent knightly castle became famous.

When the castle was ready to receive its lord, he drew near one morning on his prancing war steed. Proudly he gazed upon his work.

"Now," said he to his friends, "my name shall live forever, just as that citadel shall always lift its haughty turrets toward heaven!"

"All is vanity, says the wise king," the knight heard a voice close beside him say.

When he looked to one side, he saw an old monk with a little plant surrounded by moss in his hands.

"But honor is not vanity, holy father," replied the knight, "and the name of him who wields his sword in her service, shall descend to posterity with imperishable glory!"

"Name and fame shall perish like grass in the fields," said the monk, and bent lower to the ground, where he set his plant in a little hole and covered the roots with earth.

"Yes, such a work as yours shall surely disappear," said the knight, smiling scornfully, and looked compassionately down on the monk's planting. "But honor resembles the lofty structure of stone, which defies the change of wind, rain and time."

The monk did not answer; he only shook his head sorrowfully, and clasped his hands prayerfully over the little beech twig, which he had brought with him from a distant country and planted on the great plain before the castle.

Not a stone now indicates the place where the proud castle once raised its turrets toward heaven. No legend, no song relates the haughty man's name, which is as forgotten as that of the poor monk. But on the otherwise treeless plain a magnificent beech forest lifts its crown against the sky. When the traveler sees that beautiful park from the distance, his heavy, tired steps become lighter; with a thankful look towards the green roof he throws himself down in the shadow of the trees, beside the spring's bubbling waters, and listens to the songs of innumerable birds, till, strengthened in body and soul, he wanders on till he, too, becomes hidden and forgotten.

THE HEATHER.

WHEN God created the world with all its trees and plants, he gave to nearly all, flowers to adorn them, either small or large, plain or showy — each plant after its kind. But among them was one that did not receive this distinction, the little lowly heather bush.

This modest plant did not grumble, however, but bowed itself meekly to the ground.

Each plant had the choice of the place where it would grow.

"Here will I fasten my root," said the fragrant, snow-white lily, and took its place on the meadow.

"Here on the wave will I rock," said the water lily, and mirrored her shining petals in the bosom of the water.

"This place suits me," said the oak, and cast itself down on the hill, like a king on his throne, and then its mighty branches stretched on high.

"It is good for me to be here," said the pine-tree, and sent down its strong roots into the sand's soft breast. The green grass spread its soft carpet over hill and dale, and so each plant found a place, and the earth was soon covered. Only the hill of reddish-gray sand and rocks stood bare, because no plant had wanted to choose it for an abode.

"Ah! cover me, cover me," begged the hill; "the sun burns so strongly, and the wind strikes me so hard with its powerful wings." But none of the plants would listen to it, because the stony hill did not please them.

Then the heather lifted its small branches and replied: "If you wish I will come and clothe you." And the heather came. Lovingly it bent its little branches to the ground, and struck fast its roots in the thin soil among the stones. Soon the whole sand hill was clothed with the lovely green color.

"Yes, you can clothe it in green," said the other plants, "but you have no flowers to give."

Then a voice was heard from the sky, saying:

"For the love thou hast shown, thou, also, shalt receive flowers, and they shall bear the color of love." And immediately there hung down the loveliest tiny red flowers from every slender branch of the heather bush.

And to this day the heather wears this beautiful ornament, which it received from God for its warm love's sake; but it remains just as meek and gentle to-day as when it first took its place on the poor, stony hill, whose greatest ornament it has been ever since, and always will be.

FROM MINE AND FORGE.

In everything there dwells a spirit: in the water which roars in the brook, in the leaf that rustles on the tree, in the sun ray which filters through the leaves and branches, and comes to earth as a greeting from heaven — yes, everywhere the presence of a spirit is to be found. For this reason each thing can relate something to you, if you will only listen to it, and have ears open to its language. But that language is so mysterious that not all can understand it. The professor, the learned man, who knows what everything is called in twenty different languages, cannot hear, perhaps, what the thing relates, while the child, on the contrary, taking the first steps on Life's journey, can understand so much. That is certainly wonderful, but it depends, as we have said, on the ears being open.

Have you seen how the little bird creeps in among the thick leaves when the rain falls and the thunder rolls? Have you seen how the ivy twines around the oak and finds support in the strong thing whose rough trunk it clothes? If you have seen only that — and there are thousands on thousands such examples — then you know that one can comprehend what is meant, without hearing an audible language, for you see it is the ear, it is the heart, it is love — yes, just love — that teaches us to know, and the more we love the more we are able to comprehend. Thus it is. There is nothing skillful about it, although the wise ones of the world have bothered their brains about it ever since the creation, and just as surely will ponder on it as long as they have ground under their feet — that is to say, till the earth passes away.

Now you know how we are able to hear what things talk about, and so we can begin our legend.

Far away stood a great mountain, where elves flitted back and forth, and the waterfall foamed and rushed. It was a noble hill, one of the many in our land. Veins of ore crossed each other in innumerable directions, and iron dwelt therein in thousands, yes, many thousands of cartloads. It was a noble mountain, a rich mountain, all so unassuming, and it struck its root into the heart of the earth, where the liquid metal flows like water.

But only a little bit of the rich metal vein came up to the daylight, and that bit lay right along by the roadside. Horses tramped on it, carriage wheels rolled over it, men's feet wore the stones, and after awhile men came with sharp pickaxes and knocked off a piece, so as to make the road level.

" The rocky vein in the mountain is a continual trouble," they said.

But the spirits in the iron spoke to each other. " Those who live up there where daylight begins break and destroy," said the spirit who had been placed lower down. " Rather than stay up there and be tramped on by everybody, I would be a common gray stone."

" I never would submit to it," said another. " I should send out sparks, and roar with indignation, so that they should feel a little respect for me."

But the other, which had its position above, said nothing to this, although it heard every word. It had seen a little of the world ; it had experience, and that gives a meek and sensible mind. One may be pounded, one may be broken, perhaps trampled on sometimes, also ; it does good, if only it be pure metal in the mountain ; and in this way so much more quickly the light is reached. So it happened here, as you shall hear.

One day a gentleman drove along — such a one as reads stones, mountains and metals, and understands such things. He was traveling slowly now. The carriage wheels scraped against the mountain rock, which lay bare again. He looked at the iron bands around the wheels, for they had become such a peculiar color.

"What!" said he, and stood still. He got out, and took a machine called a compass from his pocket. In the compass sits a needle called a magnet. Such a needle is made of the very finest iron; yes, from the heart's core of the iron vein. For this reason the magnet trembles when it comes into the neighborhood of iron, and stretches its only arm out towards the spirit that lives there, because the magnet needle remembers back to its childhood's home.

The needle now moved hastily; she stood right up and down (further she could not go), with one end pointed toward the iron vein in the mountain, with the other toward heaven.

"Here is a rich streak of ore," said the traveler, and drove away. Soon he came back, however, and with him many people. They hammered and dug in the mountain, and piece after piece of ore was brought up to light. But the first piece that was split off was the part of the vein which lay in sight on the road.

"That was a fine piece of ore," said a miner and the workingmen. So they put the piece in a wagon, took it to a furnace, and smelted it; it flowed out then as the purest iron, and was put in two great moulds. In one mould it became a hammer, so large, so large, and in the other an anvil, so strong, so strong.

Beside the waterfall a great gutter was built, and in the gutter a powerful wheel turned. A little way from the wheel the hammer was placed on a large handle, and under the hammer stood the anvil. When the wheel turned around the hammer lifted, and struck against the anvil. "Klang!" rung out then, "klang!" it sounded so sprightly and fine, because it was Swedish iron in both hammer and anvil.

Piece after piece of the ore was brought up to view, and they all traveled from the mine to the furnace, and from the furnace to the forge.

The spirits in the iron immediately recognized the anvil and hammer again.

"What does this mean?" asked they.

Then the smith came and put the iron pieces in the forge, and took them out when they were red-hot, and then laid them between the hammer and anvil.

"Shall we bear this?" cried the spirits. "Shall we bear it, to be beaten by that trampled on bit of iron? No; huisch! huisch!" and in anger they sent out a shower of sparks round about the forge, so that the people who had never seen it before were frightened, and ran towards the door.

But the anvil and hammer are not cruel; no, they know that they are doing right, that the hammering does good, though it is sometimes painful when one is being moulded for life. So the hammer strikes very carefully; it does not crush the iron if it is of the right sort, it only shapes it. See how skillfully it works! The red lump grows to be a fine, smooth bar, with sharp, even corners, straight as a soldier standing at his post. But it costs much, it costs much!

"We burn up with indignation!" hissed the spirits, and shone fiery red. "Frisch! frisch!" they hiss with anger, when the smith dips them in the trough of water, in order to cool off the glowing wrath in them.

And then they become calm! They see how well the hammer and anvil meant for them.

"Old friends," they say to the beating hammer and trembling anvil, "old friends!"

And the hammer nods so kindly back. It is not haughty over all the gratitude it receives; it and the anvil have been through their time of trial before; they have been trampled and broken, and seen much out there on the country road, and such things bring a submissive spirit; it does not injure, but benefits, if only the ore is good.

KING ALARIK AND PRINCESS DUNSA.

ALARIK is the name of a king who reigned in a country which lies so far away from here that it is not to be found in the geography at all, so one can see that it must be a long way out there.

Alarik's kingdom was a beautiful one, and peaceful to live in, and the young king did everything that could be done to make it finer still, because he was a proper king, you must know. So his fame spread far around the world.

Now a little way from Alarik's country lay another kingdom, which was not quite so large, but there were fields and meadows in the country, and so it fed its people, as the saying is. The king there had also gathered a fine lot of farthings, for he was a very sensible man, and considered good household management and economy came before everything else.

He had an only daughter who would sometime inherit the kingdom and the money, and her name was Dunsa. As she now knew that she was a rich man's child, she felt very independent and thought herself very fine, of course.

"Whatever I want, I can buy, for papa has money," she was wont to say, and he could have bought a whole heap of things, it is true.

Meanwhile the fame of King Alarik went far and wide, and the ladies who entertained the Princess had so much to tell about him, how handsome and fine he was, and how much everybody thought of him, that the princess dreamed about him every night.

At last she said to the king:

"Do you know, papa, I believe I will be queen to King Alarik? You may invite him over here."

"But he has saved just nothing," said the king, and laid his forefinger on the tip of his nose, as some people are in the habit of doing when they exert themselves to think.

"The income will surely increase when he has an economical wife," answered the princess. "Besides, I am heiress to so much that we can live according to our station, and we will get more when you die, which cannot be very far from now." This last remark was not very lovingly said, but the Princess Dunsa thought so, any way.

"Certainly, certainly," said the king, biting the head of his scepter, "but"—

"I wish it so, papa," said the princess. "It will be a fine marriage." And as Dunsa had a very strong will, it happened as she wished.

So the king sent his most distinguished lord with a letter of invitation to King Alarik, and the letter was written on fine paper with gold edges, for the king could afford it. In the letter, it said that King Alarik should be welcome to meat and drink and that as long as he chose.

And the young king said thank you, and the courtier rode home with the message that King Alarik would come.

Now King Alarik wished to show gratitude for this kindly feeling, and so sent a present in the shape of a rosebush, the most beautiful that ever grew. It was now full of the loveliest buds and half-blown red roses, and this he sent to the Princess Dunsa.

In her father's house there was now a great fixing up and a tumult, whose equal had never been seen there before. Five cooks were engaged, and the whole court had to help in the kitchen besides, so that everything should be in order at the right time.

One dish after another was filled with the rarest preparations, so rich that they actually swam in butter. Yes, it was such savory food that the crows licked their bills when half a mile away from the kitchen chimney.

"Pratt! pratt! pratterat!" sounded from the courtyard. It was a trumpet, every one recognized that, and now there was running hither and thither, because they thought it was King Alarik.

But when every one gathered around, it was not he, but one of the courtiers, coming with the beautiful rosebush.

"What is that, papa?" asked Dunsa.

"Yes, tell us what is the meaning of this," said the king.

The whole court stood and gazed at the bush, but no one was able to say a word about it.

The oldest cook was sent for. She was an old and sensible woman, and had served in the court in the old king's time. After she had looked at the bush awhile, she said:

"That is a new kind of vegetable!"

"Of course it is, I thought so at once," said the king, and looked immensely wise.

"Yes, it is a vegetable," said Dunsa. "That was so delicately done, to send me just what I like most."

Then they went to work to pick off all the buds and blossoms; they chopped them fine, put them in a kettle and boiled them as they would cabbage.

One day when all was ready, the sound of five trumpets was heard in the courtyard, and this time it was King Alarik coming with his train.

He was so beautiful and so tall, he bowed so gracefully and conversed so well, that it was a pleasure to look at him and listen to him.

But now the king wished to entertain him while the table was being prepared for dinner, so he took the young king around the farmyard and the goose-house, and to the royal swine which were so round and fat and had everything so comfortable.

"That is my daughter's favorite pig," said the king, and pointed at a little red pig with a blue silk ribbon around its neck.

But up in the parlor, King Alarik looked all around to see what had become of the beautiful rosebush, but it was not to be seen anywhere.

Finally the dinner was ready and they seated themselves at the table. One course after another was borne in, but the young king did not look happy.

"It will be different when the vegetable comes," thought Dunsa, and then the vegetable came.

Then the old king arose, took a wineglass, and made a long speech, and finally thanked the guest for the rare gift, the splendid new vegetable.

But when King Alarik heard that they had made greens of his beautiful rosebush, he could not endure it. He arose, thanked them, and begged to be forgiven, but he must leave them, he said. Out went he and his courtiers, and galloped away from the old king and Dunsa.

"What was the matter with him — why did he go away?" said Dunsa, gazing out through the castle gate.

"Yes, why did he go?" said the old king; "the food was surely extremely fine."

"Oh! have mercy on me; he left because we forgot to put hard-boiled egg around the greens," said the old cook.

"Now we have it," said the old king, as light dawned upon him; and then both he and the Princess peeped out through the gate again to see if King Alarik was not coming back, but he never came.

"THOU WERT RIGHT, LITTLE DOVE."

It was cold, and stormy besides. The north wind rushed through the streets, wild and angry, and heaped the snow high here and there. People who had business out hurried home, and those who had warm garments wrapped them around themselves as carefully as possible, while the poor ran to keep themselves warm.

"It is terrible weather to-night," said one fur-cloaked man to another. It was no news he told, but people are apt to talk that way, so as to have something to say.

"Yes, indeed, it is," replied the other. "But look! the vagabonds are out, too." He pointed at an old woman, who reeled out from an ale-house, which was now locked behind her.

"Pack yourself home, you scum," said he to the woman.

At this she uttered some such words as that kind of people know well, and stumbled onward again.

"Hie, look out, old whiskey witch!" It was two street urchins who ran past; they jostled the woman so she fell headlong in a drift. She got up, threw out an oath, and went on.

"Let us punish her," said the snowflakes, and crept in among the rags in her garments.

"Yes, let us lash her," said the north wind, and drove her from the curbstone to the rows of houses, and from the houses to the curbstone again.

"No, spare her, spare her!" said a little dove, which sat curled up under the eaves. "Perhaps there is some good still left in her."

"No, there is not," answered the wind. The snowflakes agreed to this, and the dogs that looked out through the gates barked loudly.

Farther and farther wandered the woman. The high houses disappeared, the streets became more and more empty and deserted, and only one or two cottages could be seen.

"Oh! I am so cold, I am so cold," sobbed a child's voice. It was a little girl about six years old, who was wailing in distress.

The drunken woman stopped. Her hazy brain lighted up, and she took the child's hands in hers. "Poor little thing," said she, and stood firmly on her feet again. "Poor little thing!"

She carried the small hands, blue with cold, to her mouth, breathed on them until they became warm again, and rubbed the girl's cheeks till the blood returned to them.

"Hurry home, little one." She drew the worn shawl from her shoulders and wrapped it around the child. "Now run!"

And away hurried the child. But the woman remained standing there looking after her till she disappeared around a corner.

The intoxication wore away more and more. The aged one looked up towards heaven; the clouds parted, and a gleaming star shone down from on high.

"My God," whispered she very softly, and sank down on the cold drift; she kept her eyes fixed on the clear star, around which the sky grew brighter and brighter. A smile lay on the cold lips — such a one as had not rested there for many a year — but the aged one saw nothing more.

The north wind blew so soft and low, and laid the snowflakes for a covering over the woman — a covering so white and spotless that no queen rests beneath one more pure. In the morning the people found a woman frozen to death in the street.

"Any one might know that Whiskey Witch would come to such an end," they said. "She seems to look so happy," said an old woman; "I never saw her look so contented when alive."

The little dove looked down from the roof on the simple funeral procession.

"Thou wert right, little dove," whispered the wind and snowflakes.

PER JÖNSSON'S BOOT TRADE.

Per Jönsson was not a stupid man, you must know. He was strong to work, quick in his movements, shrewd and sensible besides — that is to say, shrewd in much, but not in all things; but there is scarcely any human being that is so.

His wife's name was Greta, and she stood faithfully by him in work, so that their household improved and progressed in many ways. So many things came into the possession of Per Jönsson and his wife, but nothing was a match for his work boots. He had had them now for several years, and there was not a crack in the leather, and they fitted very easily on his feet and did not press a single one of his corns. He was perfectly satisfied with them for a long time, and had every reason to be so, of course.

However it was, Per began, as time went on, to think less of his boots. Sometimes he thought they were too square at the toes, and sometimes they looked just the opposite — as if they were too pointed instead. The creases on the foot were sometimes too high up and sometimes too low down, and one fault was so, and another was so, but nothing to suit him.

"I believe I will sell my boots, I do," said the man one morning, while he sat and gazed at them with a reflective and dissatisfied air.

"And why should you do that?" answered Greta, who was peeling potatoes for breakfast.

"Why, can you not see that?" asked the man, who now felt irritable. "Why, do you not see that the tops are too short? But you women folks never see anything."

"But you certainly said yesterday that the tops were too long," added the woman.

"Did I? well, that might be, but then, they have shrunk. No, I thank you; I know how it is with neighbor Lasse's boots; they feel as easy on the feet as if he had none on."

"Well, that may be," continued Greta, "for he is tapping the soles, and that helps make them easy."

"You do not understand anything about it, mother," said the man, "but I have seen and heard a lot, I have, and now must I not know how a pair of boots should fit? You better believe I do! Now I shall go to the city and trade them off for another pair."

There was no help for the thing, because the man was so obstinate, you see. He took ten shining pieces of silver from his chest to give in exchange, and then he went to the city, where there was a market being held. He met a man carrying a pair of boots on a pole.

"Shall we trade boots?" asked Per Jönsson.

The fellow looked at Per's boots, pinched the leather, and pressed his thumbs against the soles. "I will do it," said he, "but I must have three *riksdaler* besides."

Per scratched his head, but as he wished to get rid of his boots, he agreed, and then they parted.

But when Per had walked awhile his feet felt badly; the pegs pricked him, the uppers pressed, and the heels wrinkled up.

"The boots are not worth anything," said Per, and made a wry face. Then he met another man, with whom he opened a conversation, and then proposed trading boots. This man examined Per's boots, and thought they were not good for much. "But if you will give me three *kronor* in exchange we will make a trade," said he.

Per Jönsson looked at the other's boots, and thought they looked very nice, and as for those he had on, they were past improving; so he traded, for a man must have a proper pair of boots. He now drew on the new ones, but they were worse than the others. It was exactly as if he had put his foot into a vise and an ant-hill at the same time. Indeed, it was perfectly impossible to stand up in them!

"That is very singular," thought Per, and it occurred to him that perhaps the old boots were the best, after all; but he would not admit it even to himself, no, indeed!

"When I exchange again — for I am obliged to get rid of these — I will certainly be careful."

He went limping around — for the boots hurt his feet every step he took — a long while, but could not find any boots that suited. Finally, he chanced to meet a man who had a pair of very fine boots, and he asked if they should trade.

"Well, that is worth thinking about," said the man, and they talked together a long time, bargained and haggled, and at last Per Jönsson took the boots, but he was obliged to give four *kronor* in the trade.

Per now put the boots on. He took a step with the left foot, and stopped to see if it felt easy, for he was now used to having his feet pinched, but it did not hurt at all. Then he took a step with the right foot; yes, it was just as fine as the other. Now he began to step off, and they felt very comfortable.

"There, now, that is the right kind of tackling," thought Per Jönsson. "That is the way a pair of boots ought to fit."

He turned towards home, to his wife Greta, so satisfied with his trade, although the purse was ten *kronor* lighter.

"It was dear, certainly," thought he, "but if one will have something that is good for anything, he must pay for it. How Greta will open her eyes when she sees that I was man enough to find a pair of boots for myself, better than the old ones."

Now when he got home he felt grand, and took on airs, as one can believe, and walked backwards and forwards on the floor till the boards creaked, and he stuck out his feet as much as possible; but the old woman saw nothing, she only sat and spun.

"Do you not see, mother," said Per Jönsson, "do you not see that I found a pair of perfect boots at last? What say?" He put out his right foot first, and the left one afterwards. "Do you see?"

"And are they not too narrow now, or too square at the toes or too short-legged?"

"Oh! what questions; they feel as if they had grown on my feet. Did I not say so, I could get a pair of decent boots at last? To be sure I had to give ten *kronor* in exchange, but I got what is good for something."

"Ten *riksdaler!*" shrieked Greta, for she kept to the old term, as women are apt to do. "Ten *riksdaler!*" And now she had to look at the boots, which the man standing there was so proudly showing.

"But mercy on us, father!" cried she, clasping her hands, "they are the old boots you have traded back again." And she turned down the top and pointed. Yes, there stood Per Jönsson's address. It was evident that the woman was right, and Per could not contradict it.

"H'm!" said Per, and did not speak again the whole evening. But since that day he has never complained of his boots, and it is a good thing when one can buy contentment for ten *kronor*.

THE OLD SECRETARY'S CHRISTMAS EVE.

Both large and small all through the city knew the old secretary, which was not surprising, because he always wore the same dress, and expression, too. The thin, smoothly combed gray hair was always covered by the same tall gray hat; the bushy eyebrows, the sharp eyes and the firmly closed mouth were forever unchanged. As long as any one could remember the secretary, he had worn the round blue cape with the many wide collars, the checked cotton umbrella, and the gray knee-breeches. The large galoshes went by the name of "boats" among the boys of the city; "klapp! klapp!" they sounded on the rough stones of the street. The old secretary looked so comical, many thought, but no one dared to say so, because the young folks were afraid of the man who went on his way silent and alone.

No one knew where the secretary had come from, or what his childhood had been. He wrote for people now, and helped them with their accounts, and that is the reason he was called secretary; because a person must be called something.

He did not earn much, to be sure, but he did not need much, either, where he lived in his attic room, to which no one came without an errand there. The secretary had no need to invite strangers there, it is true, for he never went out except to his work — the lonely old man.

Christmas eve had come, and just here the story begins. In the forenoon, people hurried back and forth on the streets; the shops were crowded, and Christmas presents were bought, wrapped up and sealed.

In the market place stood many Christmas spruces, both large and small, so the purchasers could choose according to their own liking and taste; and the beautiful green trees found ready sale.

In the afternoon it grew more quiet, and when evening came it was very silent out-of-doors, but in the windows light after light appeared both in the stately rooms of the rich, and the lowly hut of the poor man, because Christmas is such a blessed time that people share with each other, so that no one shall entirely miss Christmas joys.

The old secretary wandered alone through the streets towards his lonely, silent home, as he had done for many, many years. Now and then the sound of happy voices reached his ears, shadows danced gaily out on the curtains, and travelers, one and all, hastened past him with quickened steps.

"Ah, yes! this is Christmas eve," said he to himself, but silently, so that no one heard it.

"Christmas eve!" — he stopped an instant as if something special passed through his mind — "Christmas eve!"

He had now come as far as the great market place. A little boy still stood there with a small spruce-tree. He would so gladly have sold it, but now it looked hopeless to him.

The old secretary stopped before the little tree.

"What do you ask for the spruce?" he said shyly, as if he appeared stupid in asking such a question. The boy named the price; it was only twenty-five *öre*.

"Here you have it, little one," said the old secretary, and handed the boy a *krona*. "I will take the spruce with me." He moved his head a little, and that was for a nod, and walked away, while the boy, his face red with delight, ran home.

"I wonder if I had better dress the Christmas-tree for Pettersson's girl!" said the secretary to himself, just as quietly as before. He decided to do so.

He then went into several shops, and bought trinkets such as one hangs on a Christmas-tree, to the great wonderment of the clerks in the stores and the purchasers who were in them. "What has happened to the old secretary? He had a spruce in his hand," said they.

But the secretary neither heard nor thought about what the people might say. With his hands and pockets full he came home, and then began to trim up the Christmas-tree. It went slowly, for it was many, many years since he had done so, but at last it was ready with candles and everything.

"I will light the candles before I call the girl in;" and the old man lighted one after another of the small wax candles, and it became then more brilliant than it had ever been in the little room before. The old man sat down and gazed at the little tree. He clasped his hands.

"Oh! how beautiful," he exclaimed out loud, so that anybody could have heard it, if there had been any one there.

His eyebrows moved rapidly; in the corner of each eye there gleamed a tear, then many followed and fell like a soft, warm May rain, on the aged, wrinkled cheeks.

Whether it was because he saw the tree through tears or for what reason, he beheld such wonderful pictures! The room became large, the spruce grew, and a host of curly-headed children moved around it, in gleeful dance. Father and mother, yes, his own father and mother joined the ring and, yes, there was his own self, not as an old secretary, no, as a gay, blue-eyed boy with rosy cheeks, and the other children were his brothers and sisters! Faster fell the tears, but they did not burn, as when one usually weeps, but they fell softly, like dew on a summer night, on the parched plains. The old secretary hardly dared to breathe, because he was afraid the vision would vanish.

Now, the picture changes. The little ones stand beside father and mother with clasped hands.

"O, hear!" whispered the secretary. "Dear God, hear! it is surely the old Christmas psalm."

The tones rose, so distinct and clear, the delicate childish voices sounded so fresh in the evening stillness!

The secretary sang with them —

"A Virgin bears a child to-day" —

and so on through the beautiful psalm. The voice is weak and trembling, but he does not hear it, he hears the voices of father and mother, brothers and sisters, he hears his own childish tones; he is no longer in his dreary little chamber; he is in his childhood's home again, among the dear ones, whom he never thought to see again in this life.

In the outer room stood Madam Pettersson, the one who let him his room, and prepared his food for him. She never had heard him sing before; it was so strange!

"Hush, Lina!" says she to the girl, who stood right by the door, listening. "We must not go in before he is done! What do you suppose he can have there?"

— "he never from us parteth!"

now sang the secretary; that is the last verse of the psalm, and so it was ended.

Madam Pettersson opened the door. "Oh, see!" exclaimed she, clapping her hands, "the secretary has trimmed a Christmas-tree for himself!"

But the secretary did not answer. He sat leaning back in his chair, with his hands clasped and a beautiful smile on his lips. Madam Pettersson had never seen him look so cheerful.

"Secretary — oh! what! I believe he is dead!" She moved his hands, his head, but he sat the same as before.

Yes, he was dead, as she said, but he had never looked so happy, as Madam Pettersson could remember.

THE PINE AND THE FLAX.

Just where the forest ended, grew a pine-tree, taller and more beautiful than all the others in the forest, and far away could be seen its feathery round crown, whose soft branches waved so gracefully when the wind blew across the plain.

At the foot of the pine-tree the fields of grain began. Here the farmer sowed seeds of many kinds, but the flax was sowed nearest the pine. It came up beautiful and even, and the pine thought a great deal of the slender green thing. And the flax stalk raised itself higher and higher, and near the close of summer, it bore a little blue helmet on its head.

"Thou art so beautiful!" said the tall pine. The flax was embarrassed and bowed itself low towards the ground, but raised itself again so gracefully that it all looked like a billowy little sea, with rising and falling waves.

The flax and the pine often talked to each other, and became such great friends that they promised to keep each other company always.

"What kind of folly is that?" said the other forest trees to the pine. "Do not have anything to do with the flax! It is hardly an ell high, and is so weak and feeble. No; if you must have a friend, choose the tall spruce over there or the birch-tree yonder on the hill. They are tall and strong and are fit for you."

But the pine would not desert the flax, and did not listen to what its forest comrades said.

The thistle, burdock, and other small plants around there, talked to the flax.

"Are you crazy to think of the lofty pine!" said they. "Do you think it troubles itself about you? It is tall and proud, and the favorite of all the forest trees. What can you do for each other? No; children of a size play best together. Turn your attention to the juniper bush or raspberry vine, as long as you are not so very clever, and content yourself with one of us."

"I shall trust the pine-tree," replied the flax. "It looks so honorable and faithful, and I am so fond of it." And so the pine and the flax did not desert each other, whatever was said round about there.

But time passed on. The flax was pulled up, and ropes and cloth were made from it. The pine was felled, the branches were chopped off, and it was carried to the city. Still they did not forget each other, although neither knew where the other was.

In the city to which the pine was taken, lay a large and beautiful ship, lately launched in the water. On this the pine was erected as a mast, and on the highest point waved the flag with the yellow cross on the blue ground. But the proud mast could not carry the ship forward. Then there came a great white cloth; that was the sail. It went up after the mast, wrapped itself around it, spread itself out like a giant wing and caught the wind in its wide curve.

The sail was woven of the linen that grew out in the field on the edge of the wood, and both friends, who were so dear to each other, clasped each other faithfully. Out over the blue waves and foaming billows they went, to new, beautiful lands and unknown places. It was life, it was pleasure to go on united, side by side.

The wind, who travels with messages around the world, flew to the forest, to the thistle and the burdock and told them that the pine and flax, now united, were traveling over the ocean.

"Who would have believed it?" whispered the forest trees.

"Who could have believed it!" said the burdock and its comrades.

But the pine and the flax had believed it; believed in each other.

THE DIAMOND AND THE GLASS BIT.

THERE lay at the goldsmith's, on the black velvet which covered the bottom of the case, ring after ring. The case was locked, but through the thick plate glass one could see the costly ornaments which glistened so finely in the sunlight. In every ring in the row there glistened a stone; but although they were so gleamingly beautiful, they were only glass — cut-glass bits, which had been formed like precious stones. Only a single one was a genuine diamond; but the others were so like it that only the most practiced eye could discover the difference. If one looked at the small cards that were fastened to the rings, and read the price, he could see at once that there must be a difference, because the ring with the diamond, cost as many thousands as the others cost tens.

"Just think," said one of the glass bits, "how expensive and haughty His Grace is! Four thousands, if you please! And we shine just as finely for all that."

"Yes, I think so," said another glass bit. "I am cut like a solitaire; exactly like the one the king wears in his crown; no one could be able to distinguish us. I am not disagreeable over it. Heaven forbid! but one always knows his own worth, and so I must consider myself just as good as that puffed-up creature!"

"Yes, it is remarkable how haughty some people can be, although another, who can have reason to be so, is not at all pompous. My mother was a grain of sand, and once when the king was out walking, he trampled on the grain of sand — think of that! His Majesty's boot trampled on my mother! She stuck to his boot and went along with him for several hours; came into the castle and went out with the court sweepings, and afterward went, with many other grains of sand, to the glass-house. But she never forgot who she was, never! and I am her daughter. But am I haughty towards you for that? Do I not lie here among you others, just as if I were not better than you? When I made love to that diamond there, just think, he thanked me, but did not wish to bind himself; pride, only pride! Now I must remain single, for he was the only one suitable for me, and one cannot go entirely out of her station."

Then the door opened and in came a gentleman, a fine gentleman, with a sable collar on his traveling coat; it was nearly Christmas time, and it was cold out. The goldsmith bowed himself low, for he recognized the rich earl who lived a few miles from the city, and knew that the business he should do with him, would amount to something.

"I wish to buy a ring for my lady love," said the earl, "a ring with a real diamond in it, if you have such a one."

Certainly, there was one, just that one of which the rings were speaking. It was taken out and turned around so it shone against the daylight.

"I can see that is a fine stone, a real diamond," said the earl. "I understand a little about precious stones." And then they agreed to the price and the earl bought the ring.

"It is only glass in these, of course," said he, and pointed to the others.

"Yes, only cut-glass," replied the goldsmith, and took up the ring whose mother had once been in the pile of court-sweepings. "But they are well cut."

"I shall buy this one, too, for novelty's sake," said the earl, and so the two rings were laid in the same case.

"Farewell," said the diamond to its comrades.

"Just see; an engagement has come about, after all," said the bit of glass in the ring. "If I should meet you out in the world, I should try to recognize you."

The earl put the case in his pocket, jumped into his sleigh and drove out into the country, towards home. But while the sleigh was speeding over the snow-covered road, the ring case slipped out of his pocket down into the sleigh, and when they jolted a little, it fell on the country road.

The sleigh went over it, the case was crushed, and the rings lay in the snow. As it was evening, no one saw the shining ornaments; sleighs and horses' hoofs went over them, and when morning dawned, they could not be seen at all, they had been so trampled in. The earl was very sad when he missed the rings, but all search was in vain; they were gone.

They were dark days that followed, for it was a hard winter. Long sledges, heavy carts and the sharp hoofs of horses passed over them. The rings were pressed down deeper and deeper, and soon they lay on the hard stone road. When spring came the snow melted, and vehicles rattled over the hard gravel.

But at last summer came, and the snow was entirely gone, and the rain laid the dust on the road. A couple of children were running along.

"Oh, look!" cried the boy, "see what I have found!" He picked up two small shining bits of glass, which plainly had once belonged together. It was the remains of the bit of cut-glass. The gold was not to be seen; that was worn away by the wheels.

"But just look here," said the girl. "See, this is whole!"

It was the diamond she had picked up, separated from its setting, but whole, in spite of all to which it had been exposed.

"What shall we do with them?" said the boy.

"I shall string them on a thread, to wear around my neck as a necklace," said the girl.

But when they came home, and their father, who was an intelligent man, saw the stones, he said:

"I will take them with me to the city; perhaps the goldsmith will give us something for them."

He wrapped the newly-found stones in a paper, which he put in his pocket.

"This is a fine way to travel!" said the broken glass bit, which could not forget that it was once in company with the court-sweepings.

When the goldsmith saw the stones he recognized them at once.

"My dear man, that was a rare find," said he. "The earl at Harg will surely pay you a fine reward."

When the earl heard that the stones were found, he came at once to the goldsmith's.

"Here is the diamond," said the latter. "See, my lord, not a scratch on it, not a speck broken off, although hundreds of carriages have passed over it. Now we will set it in another ring, and it will be just as fine as ever. But look at this bit of glass! It has broken into two pieces, and is covered all over with scratches. Now one can see the difference between them." And upon this he threw the pieces of glass into the corner, with the sweepings, but the diamond came upon the finger of the countess, and the two poor children who found the stone, received more money than they had ever dreamed of in their lives.

THE OLD MAN, OLD WOMAN, AND THE WINDMILL.

There was once an old man and an old woman, and there are many of them — but they could not agree, and that is not altogether unusual, either.

When the old man said that anything was so and so, the old woman said the contrary; and if the woman thought a raven was black, the man would then wager his life on it that it was white.

So they wrangled with each other day in and day out, and no one could remember that they had ever agreed about anything in the world.

Now it so happened that they had to go to the mill one day, with grist. It was a long way there, and a steep climb to the mill, for it stood on a high hill, so it could get good wind.

"You do not pull at all, father," said the woman. "I have to go shoving the whole load alone."

"I do not pull!" answered the man. "I pull so much that I am bent double, but you do not shove for a farthing. I believe you are hanging on, into the bargain."

But finally they got the cart uphill and the corn into the mill. After that was done, they went out to look at the wings. The wind blew fresh and strong, and the wings turned so fast that they whizzed. The old man stood in front of the mill, and the old woman back of it, so the wings were between them.

"They go against the sun," shrieked the man, who had to speak loud to be heard.

"No, they go with the sun," shrieked the woman.

"They go against!" cried the man.

"They go with it! with it!" shouted the woman.

"You must have your way, of course," screamed the man. "You never give up, no matter how wrong you are," said the woman, raising her voice.

"But can you not see they go against the sun?" The man jumped up and caught hold of a wing.

"Cannot you see anything at all!" The woman took hold of the same wing from the opposite direction.

But now the man and woman were borne up into the air, for it was useless to try to hold the mill wings. But after they had gone up a little way, they let go, and fell to the ground.

"Hi! how that hurt!" said the man.

"O, my! how that did hurt!" wailed the woman.

Then they limped away, and for once were agreed, but whether it happened again is not so easy to say; and so this story could not be any longer.

GOLDILOCKS.

What I am about to tell you happened long, long ago — at the time when there were castles with high towers and strong walls; when knights in shining armor, and with a cross on the shoulder, rode to the Saviour's grave, to wrest it from the hands of unbelievers; when the lovely ladies of the castle sewed with silk and gold threads, in the maiden's bower, and rode beside the knights with falcon on the hand, to hunt the birds of the air and the beasts of the forest.

In one of these castles there lived a knight, alone with his only child, a daughter.

When the knight rode away with the soldiers of the cross, his wife still lived, but when he returned from foreign lands, after many years of battle and adventure, the pious woman had gone to rest, and only the daughter remained.

She was the pride of the knight and the apple of his eye, and beautiful as a spring morning. Her long light hair gleamed like gold around her fair face, and for this reason she was called Goldilocks.

One day, when Goldilocks, who was now grown up, sat in the maiden's bower, she saw a knight with his followers ride by. He was so handsome that Goldilocks had never seen any one more beautiful, and when she inquired who he was, she was told that he was a young prince who lived in a neighboring country.

Day and night she now thought only of him, and great was her joy when her father said that they were soon to go and visit his castle. Goldilocks wished for nothing now but to please the young prince, so he should take her for his bride. Early and late she stood before the mirror, curled her hair and made herself the finest of dresses. When she saw her image in the mirror, she thought:

"I am so beautiful that Valdemar" — that was the prince's name — "must love me."

She was so eager to look at herself to see if she was beautiful enough, that she had a little mirror made, which she could carry in her pocket, so it would always be handy.

Now when she went into the chapel one Sunday, to listen to the holy mass, she put the mirror in her prayerbook, and then when the priest read, she forgot God and his word, to look at herself in the hand-glass, and not till "Amen" was pronounced and all rose to go, did she shut the glass into the book.

When she came out of the chapel, she spoke to her father, but he turned to her in surprise and said:

"What do you wish, woman?"

She did not know what he meant by these words, but answered:

"What do you mean, father?"

"Audacious and wicked woman! what do you want? If you do not know how to speak respectfully, I will have the servants drive you away."

Goldilocks did not know what to think of these cruel words. Perplexed, she cast down her eyes, and then she noticed that she no longer had on the kind of dress that ladies of rank were accustomed to wear. Her clothes were coarse and torn, she had a great handkerchief, such as peasant women wear, on her head, and her hands were rough with work. When she looked into a water tank beside the road, she could not recognize her own face. She was hideous to look upon, and appeared like a goose tender or swine herd.

"Where is Lady Goldilocks?" several voices now called out, because the master of the castle missed his daughter. "Where is Lady Goldilocks?"

"I am Goldilocks, I am Goldilocks," replied she.

"You speak falsely," said one of the men servants. "You look like a witch, and perhaps have spirited away the maiden."

"Drive the old witch away! drive the old witch away!" cried several voices, and Goldilocks was driven away from the castle with lashes and blows.

"If you come back you shall be burnt alive, you evil witch," said the angry castle steward, and Goldilocks did not dare to turn back.

So she went on, weeping hot tears, continually forward and onward, the whole night and the day after. Towards evening she came to a great castle, but she was so tired then, that she sank down by the wayside. After she had lain here awhile, she heard a voice saying:

"Carry her into the kitchen, and give her food, then we will see what is to be done."

When Goldilocks opened her eyes, she recognized the young prince; it was to his castle she had come.

Friendly hands gave her food, and in a few days her strength came back again; but she did not tell any one her name or who she was. In order to be near the prince, she took a place in the service of the castle as shepherdess. During the day she went with the animals into the forest, but in the evening she placed herself outside of one of the castle windows, through which she could see the young knight now and then, as he related his exploits in battle or enjoyed himself with his followers. Goldilocks never wearied of gazing at him, although she could hardly get a glimpse from his friendly eyes now, much less become his bride.

Once in a while Goldilocks happened to meet an old woman in the woods, whose burdens she helped to carry, and with whom she often shared her frugal repast. The old woman taught Goldilocks to recognize all the forest herbs, and explained the uses of each, so that the young shepherdess became a skillful healer, though no one knew of her skill.

Sometimes she saw the prince ride by in the forest, hunting with his followers; he looked so stately then on his white courser and Goldilocks often trembled when she saw him climb before the others, up the mountain precipices, over fallen trees or along the deep chasms that here and there rent the ground.

The prince had a hunting castle in the forest, where he often passed the night after a hunt. There was great cheer when the cup went around the board on which a roasted wild boar or a horn-decked stag bent the knee; and the torches' light was reflected in the polished armor with which the walls were covered.

Goldilocks knew the path well, that led up to the little castle, and many evening hours she passed there, gazing on the young prince's face. She sat on a high stone, over which a leafy tree spread its branches, so that no one could see the little homely shepherdess who used to sit there long after the light of the torches was quenched and the hunters had sunk into deep slumber after the day's fatigues.

One night, when she sat there in this way, weeping over thoughts of former days, she saw a bright light in the windows of the castle. All at once flames burst out through the roof, and Goldilocks hurried down and pounded with a stone on the castle door to wake up the sleepers.

Waking in confusion, the knights and pages sprang out of the burning house, but the prince was missing. No one dared go in among the roaring flames to save him. Then Goldilocks hurried forward and rushed among the falling, burning beams, to the prince's room, whose door she burst in. He lay senseless on the bed, nearly suffocated by the smoke.

Goldilocks never knew from what source she received her strength, but she took the prince in her arms and hurried out. The fire scorched her hair and that of the prince, burnt Goldilocks' hands, and caught in her clothing; burning beams fell more than once across her way; she came out, however, but fell to the ground instantly, with her burden, just as the walls crushed in.

When she recovered consciousness, she lay on a bed in the castle. Her wounds were soon healed, and the prince came and thanked her warmly for her courage and her sacrificing action. He offered her goods and gold in reward, but she would take nothing, only begged to be allowed to tend the herds as before.

Every time the prince rode past her after this, he greeted her cheerfully and often spoke with the "homely shepherdess," as she was called. This pleased Goldilocks very much, but when she heard that the knights and pages sometimes jested about her hideous looks, she wept and bitterly regretted her sin.

One evening when she came home, there was great confusion in the castle. The prince had fallen sick, and no one could tell what kind of sickness it was. But the old armor bearer, who had been with the prince's father in warfare in foreign lands, recognized it as "black death," or the "deadly pest," which had seized the young lord.

Then the deepest terror fastened on the castle inmates, and they all fled, except the aged armor bearer and the "homely shepherdess." The latter went into the room without fear, and now her knowledge of the forest herbs was useful to her. She prepared healing draughts, and watched day and night by the pest-smitten bed.

Weeks went by and still it was uncertain whether life or death would be victor. At last, one morning, when the sun rose and shone in beautifully through the window of the sick room, the prince opened his eyes, which were calm and clear. The fever was gone, and he talked rationally with the old armor bearer, who was watching while Goldilocks took a short rest.

The prince then learned all that had happened:

that his friends and servants had fled, and that the shepherdess had watched over him and saved him from death.

"This is the second time that she has saved my life," said the prince.

When Goldilocks came to the bedside, he reached his hand out to her.

"Thank you, faithful little shepherdess," said he; "you have saved my life!"

Goldilocks' heart beat with blessed joy.

"Not I, but God, has saved you, gracious lord," said she.

The prince did not reply, but held the shepherdess' rough hand a long time in his, and looked into her deep, dark eyes, the only remaining sign of her former beauty. He remembered these eyes; he knew them well. During his fever they had often looked lovingly on him.

After a few days the prince was out of danger, and after a few weeks he was able to be up. Servants, knights and pages had begun to come back, and he had no longer need of Goldilocks' services.

One morning when she came into his room, she said: "Now you are so well, gracious sir, that you no longer need my care, I am going out into the woods again."

"No, do not go," said the prince, taking her hand. "Stay here. You have twice saved my life. I cannot spare you. Be my wife!"

The little shepherdess stood a long time speechless and bewildered over this happiness. She loved the beautiful prince, and he was constantly in her thoughts. She reflected on her homeliness, and that the prince would soon realize his unhappiness at her side; that he, who was so fair, deserved to have a different bride from the homely shepherdess. She burst into tears, both of joy and sorrow. It was so hard to answer as she ought and cast all her life's happiness away from her. But she said to him:

"Gracious sir, I thank you for your kindness, but I cannot be your bride. I am not suited to castle halls. I must go again to the forest, and will be glad if I can be shepherdess here as long as I live."

But when she had said this and was going, something wonderful happened. Scales seemed to fall from her face and hands, her hair waved long and shining as gold, and the ragged garments changed to those she had on in the chapel of her father's castle.

"Who are you, oh, wonderful, beautiful fairy! who are you?" cried the prince.

And Goldilocks told him all; who her father was, how she had seen Prince Valdemar ride by her bower, how she afterwards thought about him, sinned and was punished.

"But now there is nothing to hinder you from giving me your hand," said the prince, "and becoming my wife."

"First we must go home to my father's castle," said Goldilocks, and smiled on the prince, who took her in his arms, and put a costly ring on her hand; then they rode side by side on splendid coursers, to Goldilocks' home, while a large troop of knights, armor bearers and pages followed in their train.

Beside the road sat a blackbird in a tree and sang: "Three times, three times, three times!"

"What does the blackbird say?" asked Goldilocks jestingly of her bridegroom.

"He says," answered Valdemar, "that you were proven three times; first, when you bore me from the burning hunting castle; second, when you nursed me while I was sick with the pest, and the third time, when I asked the shepherdess to be my bride and she refused. But which test was the hardest?"

"Last hardest, last hardest, last hardest!" replied the blackbird.

"He is right, the last was the hardest," said Goldilocks, smiling on him.

In the father's castle there was such surprise and rejoicing when the only daughter returned as one from the dead that words cannot describe it. And then there was a wedding, whose equal was never seen in seven kingdoms, and Goldilocks and Prince Valdemar lived happy all their days.

WHEN THE SUN RISES.

It was evening; yes, dark night in the forest. The sun had long since gone down; every one had gone to his dwelling; the animals had sought their resting places in the underbrush, and the birds had crept into their nests. Only the owls, bats and moles remained out. Down by the edge of the marsh, where glow-worms, jack-a-lanterns and fire-flies spread a dim light about, the lovers of the night were gathered.

"I wonder how it would be if we did not exist?" said the glow-worm.

"The sun might as well hide himself forever," the jack-a-lantern thought. "We give much better light. No one gets a pain in the eyes looking at us."

"I agree with you," joined the owl, "the sun shines altogether too strong; I cannot bear him. And then there is such a disturbance in the woods when he rises! Bullfinches, sparrows, larks, and whatever they all are, then begin, Heaven protect us! to bawl with all their might. No, he can just as well stay away."

"Neither can I discover of what use that sunshine is," said the firefly. "For that reason, neither I nor any of my family will honor him with our presence, so we leave the instant he appears."

"One could certainly do very well without the sun," said the mole. "Suppose we should frighten him away when he tries to peak over the tree tops in the forest."

"I will do what I can towards it," said the owl; "I will screech the loudest I am able."

"And we three," said the firefly, flitting between the jack-a-lantern and glow-worm, "we will shine in a way that he has never seen equaled. Then we shall see, fast enough, if he dares mount up as haughtily as usual."

"My assistance shall not be wanting," said the mole, "especially as I am the originator of the idea. I will throw up such a sand hill, that he never will be able to shine over it." And then he began to scratch and dig with all his might, with his front paws.

"We will spread out our wings," said the bat, "so he cannot send a ray down to the earth."

And the bats spread out their wings, the mole dug, the fireflies and glow-worms shone with all their might. High up on a great rock sat the owl and rapped with his crooked bill.

"There will, indeed, be a new order of things here," said he. "Sing now, you gaping birds!

leap, you hares and roes! I wish you joy, you flowers! I think your rejoicing will be more moderate now."

The sky began to redden in the east, and the color grew stronger and brighter every minute. The three lights strained with all their might, the mole dug, the bat spread out its wings, and the owl screeched continually.

But the sun mounted up and poured a film of gleaming gold over land and water. The small lights at the marsh's edge went out immediately, the mole crept into its hole, the bat and owl hid themselves in the thickest brush.

But the waves of fresh morning air, the flowers' fragrance and the birds' exulting voices, announced to all the world, that the sun had risen!

THE SWALLOWS.

"*Quivitt, quitt, quivitt,*" sang they. It was the swallow father and swallow mother, who had come home again after their long journey; come home in the spring time to put in order their old nest that rested under the eaves. It had rested there for many, many years, so long, that no one could remember back so far. The old overseer, who was not able to do any more work, and was the eldest person in the parish, could not remember the day when the swallows' nest did not rest there.

The family on the estate were so afraid something would harm it. "Take care of the old swallows' nest," said they to the workmen, when the building was being repaired. And so the nest had remained there for an age, and pair after pair of swallows had had it for their summer home.

The swallows thought they belonged to the family, too, and said "we" when they spoke of the people in the mansion, and "our" when they spoke of any of the children, so that one could not know whether they meant themselves, or the young ladies of the family or their own young ones. But that made no difference; it only showed that the swallows thought a good deal of the people in the house; and they were quite right, because they were one.

The years went by and the young girls — the people who owned the place had no sons — grew up to young ladies, but the swallows thought just as much of them for that. They had seen them grow up, they had seen them daily all through the summer, and when the young ladies sat with their parents in the porch, the swallows peeped down at them from the old nest.

"*Quitter, quitter — vitt*," said the swallows, and the young ladies repeated it, because they had learned to know the swallows; so they spoke to each other, and although the ladies could not understand the swallows' language, they could hear perfectly well whether the birds were sad or happy.

"See! what shrewd and beautiful eyes they have," said one of the sisters; "I should recognize them among a hundred other swallows." She stretched out her hand; the swallow did not wish to sit down, but it flew so near that it nearly brushed the snow-white fingers with its long, soft wings.

But one spring when the swallows came back, the young ladies were dressed in black, and looked very sad. When they saw the two swallows, however, they smiled.

"It is so sad here now, little swallows," said one, and the little birds understood so well, although people think that swallows cannot understand human talk. "It is so sad here now, because father and mother have died. We must soon go far from here, too — far away to the South. Farewell, little birds!"

The two young ladies stepped into a carriage, and then traveled by railroad and by steamer, and went at a rapid pace far away to the land where the sun shines so warmly and no winter comes, and the trees are always covered with green leaves. Everything there was luxurious and splendid, compared to the cold North.

There the two sisters lived for a year, then two years, and as time went on, the memory of their native land up in the North faded away.

A steward had come upon their estate, who was cruel towards the people and friendly to none.

"Next summer I will clear up here," said he. "All the old swallow nests shall be torn down; they only deface the house."

"But the beloved family thought so much of the swallows, and the young ladies were so careful of their nest," replied the aged overseer.

"Nonsense! what difference does that make to me?" said the steward. "I command here now."

The swallows heard, also, what was said, as they sat in the nest. They were so grieved, and the young ones, which had lately gotten their first small feathers, felt sad, too.

"What shall we do now?" asked the swallow mother. "Shall we plead with the steward?"

"That will not help us," answered the swallow father, and he stood upon one leg, for he could think better so, and then he deliberated awhile.

"We will seek out our young ladies and beg them to come home," said he.

"Ah! that was a clever idea," thought the swallow mother, and the young ones.

When the swallow children were ready to fly, they set out with their father and mother. But it was not easy to find the young ladies, for the world is large. They flew around and sought them for nine or ten days, but in vain.

On the thirtieth day, along towards evening, they heard voices that they recognized with joy again; yes, it was their young ladies.

"*Quirrevivitt! quirrevivitt!*" said the swallows, and seated themselves right beside their friends from the far north.

"Oh! look, listen," said one of the sisters, "these are the swallows from old Sweden — from our home."

"From Sweden," exclaimed the sister, and they threw their arms around each other. The faded memories received life and color. The old home land with its lakes and dark forests, with the green fields and the white church towers, sprung to life before them; their hearts beat quickly and their eyes filled with tears.

"*Quirrevivitt, quirrevivitt, vitt, vitt!*" sang the swallows.

"We will go home, yes, to Sweden, to Sweden," cried the sisters in one breath.

They journeyed hastily towards the north, and soon they stood again on the old familiar soil that had been their forefathers' home.

There was gladness and joy over their return, among both great and small.

"Shall we tear down the swallows' nest?" said the steward, for he dared not do it now, without asking.

"The swallows' nest," replied the ladies, and looked so astonished. "No; that shall be well protected, because it is the swallows that called us home." And the swallows' nest was allowed to remain, and sits there even to this day.

A MOTHER'S LOVE.

When St. Peter was out wandering on this earth, he stood still awhile, one day, on a high mountain, from which he could see the whole country around. Right down by the mountain ran a road to church, and as it was one Sunday morning, the road was full of people going to God's house.

While St. Peter stood there and rejoiced that the people were so devout, the Evil One came, because he has no respect for persons or places.

"You stand here looking very happy," said the Evil One, and laughed scornfully; "and yet you must know that no one of those down there can withstand me."

Then St. Peter also smiled, but it was a good smile, and he pointed to a woman, who went by at that instant, with her son.

"There you see a mother," said he. "I know that she is a widow, and the youth there is her only child. There does not appear to be so much strength about her, tired out as she is, with toil and sorrow; and yet she is stronger than you; for you have not power to separate her from her child — you could not conquer a mother's love."

Then the Evil One's eyes shone as coals of fire do in the darkness. "Can I not!" exclaimed he. "Cannot I, who am so strong, be able to vanquish a weak woman? You shall soon see."

Away went the Evil One, to carry out his wicked intentions, and St. Peter wandered further.

Awhile after this the widow's son was away, no one knew where, but the mother went out in the great world and wandered day and night. She inquired of the people she met, she asked the birds and the winds of heaven about her son, and never wearied of searching. Here and there she received an answer which put her on the track, and finally she came far up toward the Poles, where perpetual cold prevails. Here she found her son, but snow and hard ice covered him all over. Then the poor widow, whose feet bled from the journey over sharp stones, whose limbs trembled from fatigue and hunger, took the ice-covered one to her bosom, and with the warm, beating heart and hot tears melted the ice and the lost child was once more her own.

It was Sunday again, and St. Peter stood on the mountain and the Evil One came also.

"Now you can see," said he, and smiled his evil smile. But at the same time St. Peter stretched out his hand and pointed to the widow, who passed with her newly-found son, to God's house.

The Evil One turned pale, but it was not pallor for his guilty action, but because it had not succeeded. And he went away.

Soon after, the widow's son was no more at home, and the mother went out again to seek him. This time she wandered further than before, and inquired still more. Often she came near sinking down, crushed by the hardships of the journey, with bitter grief and anguish of heart.

At last she came to a prison, where great criminals were secured, and her son was here.

"Let me come in," begged she.

"Poor mother," said he who had charge over the prisoners, "do not go there! He is wild and hardened; he will kill you if you go near him. Do not attempt it."

But the mother pleaded so earnestly that no one could oppose her, and she was let in.

She threw herself on her son's breast, but he cast her from him; he struck her so she fell senseless and was borne out. But she came again and again; she pleaded and wept, folding the unfortunate one in her arms at the same time, although every time he cast her from him.

One day he threw himself angrily on his hard bed, in order to sleep and get rid of hearing her "miserable noise," as he called it. But when he awoke, there stood his mother holding her kerchief before the little grated window, so the sun should not shine into the suffocating cell and disturb his sleep. And she sang softly one of the old psalms, to the sound of which he had often slumbered and awaked. Then tears began to flow over his cheeks, and he kneeled before his mother, hid his face in her lap, and wept like a child — wept so his whole body shook; wept long.

When he finally rose he was crushed, repentant, but he was once more his mother's son.

And the king of the country, to whom the mother went with warm prayers, had heard all; how she had striven, struggled and suffered, and he gave her back her child.

On the mountain by the church stood St. Peter, and looked at the people. As before, the Evil One came there and laughed his malicious laugh.

"Indeed!" said he, "where are your widow and her son now?"

"There," said the holy man, pointing to where the mother and the son again wandered together on the road which led to the little white temple on the hill.

"Ah! now I shall try the last means," said the Evil One, "and you will never after see them together."

Soon the mother had to go out again to seek her son. She wandered the world over; she sought in the lands where the sun burns like fire on the wanderer's head; she searched among the polar icebergs, in the homes of poverty and of wealth, in dens of crime and among the seekers of the temple, but all was in vain. The wounded feet bore her up with pain, the emaciated form could scarcely remain upright, but forward, forward she stumbled unceasingly. Finally she had been everywhere she could think of, where her son might be, but her anxious heart would not allow her to stay. So she went down towards the sea, whose low and sandy shores spread as far as eye could reach.

When she looked at the grains of sand, she thought some of them seemed very peculiar; she took up one, then took up several. She knew not why, but a tremor of hope began to fill her soul. She searched day and night, by sunlight and starlight, and wandered year after year along the shore, till one day she had been around the whole ocean, and had gathered every grain of sand that was like the one she had first picked up. It was a heavy, heavy burden; but when all the grains were together and the woman spread them on a beautiful soft grass plot near the shore, they began to move mysteriously and to place themselves in the form of a figure, which became more and more like a man, then took the son's likeness, then breathed and had life; it was the widow's lost, but newly-found son.

The Evil One had crushed him to the finest sand, and cast the grains along all the shores of the sea. And if only one — even the least grain — had been missing he could never have taken the form of man again; never been restored to life. But the searching mother had not forgotten the least atom; nothing had escaped her searching eyes, her trembling hands, her loving heart.

Once more it was Sunday, and on the mountain St. Peter stood, as many times before, and the Evil One came, too. People were on their way to church; the crowd was larger than usual.

"Look," said the Evil One, "this time the widow has not been able to find her son."

"Down there you see a casket," said St. Peter, "and right behind it a man is walking. The man is the son; in the casket rests the mother, who died when she finally recovered her son. But even in death she conquered; love has overcome you."

Then the Evil One laughed no more scornfully. "Is love so strong, so mighty, that it conquers all things?" he asked.

His heart, where all evil, all sorrow, all anguish are gathered, burned, and his eyes flamed like fire. He went away with slow steps, while the sun shone, and the birds sang in the neighboring forests. But from the little church below there sounded the funeral bell, and in St. Peter's eyes there shone tears of joy.

FROM THE GROVE.

Out in the grove it was still and quiet as the grave. Long spider webs hung from branch to branch, unmoved by the wind, for he had not visited the forest for a long, long time. The brook flowed slowly on; and for this reason a thick mass of half-moulded leaves and other rubbish lay on its surface, so the sun and sky could not mirror themselves in its waters. The grass grew thinly, the flowers hung their heads, and the leaves of the trees drooped. The birds that came hither sat perfectly silent, and if a butterfly happened to wander to the place, it flew terrified away again and never returned.

Here in the deep bushes the owl mother and father, together with their friends — and they are many — had their nests and were very comfortable in the darkness. The mole ruled the place like a lord. No sun rays penetrated down through the cobwebs, dust and dry leaves, and so it perfectly suited him and the owls and leeches.

In the midst of the grove stood an oak; it was not large, but the roots and branches were tough, so it raised itself at last to the top, over the other trees.

One morning when the sun rose, a blackbird sat in the top of the oak, and he began to sing his lovely song about God and freedom, sun and light.

"Oh! hear," said the flowers, and lifted their heads, which reddened with pleasure.

"Hi and hey! oh, hear! oh, hear!" laughed the brook, and jumped so that the rubbish that lay on its bed and surface slid away.

"Listen, listen," sighed the leaves, and trembled with joy.

"Dear friend, is it thou? dear, is it thou?" sang the wind, and rushed forward between the branches and leaves, so the cobwebs were rent in a thousand bits, and the dry limbs fell to the ground. It became so fresh and lovely among the tree trunks because the air grew pure, and the suffocating vapors were borne far, far away. Every bud and blade started; all was rushing life; there was exulting and gladness in the grove, and in the oak the blackbird sat and sang

"See how good our God is;
See how blue the heaven;
How beautiful the world is;
Feel, so warm the sun's rays;
Freedom, dearest treasure
By our Father given,
I will sing thy praise!"

Down in the earth in the moles' caves and corridors, it was also lively — yes, a perfect hubbub.

"Have you ever heard," said the moles to each other, "such a fearful noise as that is? The wind is blowing through the grove, and the air will soon be so sharp up there, that an honest mole can scarcely breathe."

"Yes," continued another, "if it goes on like this the sun will shine into every corner, and then what shall we do?"

"The whole thing is the blackbird's fault," cried all to each other.

"Could the owl father and owl mother not eat him up?" asked some one.

"They have tried, they have tried; but it was so sunny up there in the oak — all the spider webs and dry leaves were blown away — it was so sunny that they got frightened and flew away. Now they are hiding out in the forest and dare not go up there again."

"Oh! how wretched, how wretched," and they scratched their heads.

Then the old mole commanded silence; he was the most distinguished in the kingdom of moles, and had been ruler in the grove up to this time.

"Go and forbid the blackbird to sing, at the peril of being in disgrace; command the grass, flowers, brook and trees — and everything else up there — to shut their ears to the singing. Tell the spiders to spin again, and take care that the old order of things comes back." So spoke the old mole, then tried to take a nap, in spite of the life and jubilation that sounded above.

In a short time they came screaming back.

"Oh! it is a vain effort," they complained. "Some of them will scarcely listen to us, and those who gave us their attention for awhile, laughed at us. There is such fresh air, such sunlight and greenness, and such singing up there, that we nearly perished."

The old mole sat silent awhile. Then an idea occurred to him.

"We will gnaw off the roots of the oak," said he, "so the blackbird will not have any safe place to sit, and then he will fly away. And when the oak falls, his nest, his mate, and the young blackbirds will come to the ground, and we will eat them up."

After this remark there followed a general piping and mumbling, which was to express hearty applause. All the moles licked their mouths at thought of the blackbird steak. And they betook themselves in a body to the place where the roots of the oak were, and began to gnaw, and they are still at it to-day.

But when they bit off one root, ten other roots would instantly grow out of the same place, so the tree stood firmer and firmer.

But they did not notice it down there in the twilight, but gnawed and gnawed constantly.

Higher and higher the oak and the other trees raise their crowns, and tranquilly rocks the blackbird's nest on the strong boughs. The grove grows lovelier all the time, fresher and freer stream life and freedom on, and the sun, the blue heavens, and the gleaming stars mirror themselves in the brook's pure, clear waters. And in the oak top the blackbird sings:

"See how good our God is;
See how blue the heaven;
How beautiful the world is;
Feel, so warm the sun's rays;
Freedom, dearest treasure
By our Father given,
I will sing thy praise."

HOW GRANNAS-NILS BECAME SUCH A HERO.

BEFORE this Grannas-Nils had not had a reputation for being a stout man, either in courage or his arms.

When he had to go out in the dark to give the horses food, he would have at least a farm boy with him, and when it was to be proved who was the stronger, he kept out of the way, as you shall soon hear. But no one can tell what people will do before they are tested, and it was so with Grannas-Nils, too.

It was towards Christmas-time, and the master of the house had errands to the city after one thing and another; and as Nils took care of the horses, he had to go, of course.

Now he was a little cast down in spirits, for a rumor had spread that two thieves had broken loose and roamed in the neighborhood, so Nils would gladly have left the city by daylight, of course, but that could not be, for he wanted to take home a cask of "weak drink," and it would not be ready before evening. But when Nils had got the Christmas drink bound fast to his sleigh, he had everything in order, and drove out through the toll-gate.

There he sat on the load, and it grew darker and darker. When he came to the forest it was black as coal, but the snow was so white that he could find his way, however.

Now Nils thought gloomy things and grew so frightened that he thought he saw a robber in every bush, who longed for his life and load. He whipped up the horses, and they galloped along the road till he came to a place where high mountains rose on both sides. Here two beggars were walking along, but Nils did not see what kind of folks they were, but thought they were the thieves, and their canes looked exactly like guns or other fatal weapons.

But as the man was obliged to keep on, he gave the horses a cut, so they went ahead still faster; and then it happened that just as he was opposite the beggars, the bung flew out of the beer cask with a dreadful explosion, because the drink had begun to work.

But Nils thought they were shooting at him, and could not believe it was anything but blood that was running when he heard the Christmas drink splashing. He expected to die every minute, and so he drove as if his life depended on it. When he at last came home, and found he was alive, he began to recover himself. But he was sure he had been pursued by two robbers.

When he came into the kitchen he told how he had been out, and that robbers had attacked both his life and load, and shot at him so the balls whistled by his ears. But he had defended himself like a man, and had arrived safely home with everything.

It so happened that the sheriff arrested the two thieves the next day after Grannas-Nils was out, and then it was plain that Nils spoke the truth. Yes, one could see blood tracks on the road — it was the "weak drink" that had run out — and the tracks followed the sledge a long way, and one could see by them that the bandits had followed Nils a long distance, the sheriff said. The strangest thing was, the thieves had not a single scratch on them, from which the blood could have flowed, and they would not own that they had met the servant on the road, but that was nothing to go by, for such folks are so sly and will never tell the truth, said the sheriff.

But the talk about Nils and his bravery spread far and wide, and a little was added here, and a little there, so it became a perfect feat of war he had performed; and his bravery was not shown in vain.

One day the minister sent a special message to Grannas-Nils to come to church the next Sunday.

Of course Nils went, and after the service was over, the minister came forward in the church, and made a most unusually beautiful speech about courage and God's help in time of trouble, so the women wept and long before the minister told the name, everybody knew it was Nils to whom he referred.

After he had finished he took up a medal which hung on a fine ribbon; the whole thing had come from the king himself, and it was now hung around Nils's neck, so people should see what sort of a person Nils was, for it said on it that the brave servant honestly earned it.

But the poor beggars knew nothing of it, and the "weak drink" cask could not speak.

And that is the way Grannas-Nils became such a hero.

AT THE MOLE'S COURT.

Autumn had gone and winter begun. The wind came icy cold from the north, and every leaf on the trees, every blade on the bushes was blown away. The grass lay beaten down on the ground, and the rain lashed it with its great, heavy drops. No ray of sunlight pierced the thick, dark clouds, which chased each other so wildly over the sky.

The birds that had their dwelling-places on the mountains or in the forests had long ago flown to warmer lands, because they felt that winter was approaching.

Only one little lark remained hopping among the rye stubble on the fields. She would gladly have flown with the others, but she was not able, for she had injured her wing on a brier-bush, so she could not fly with the rest. Now she sat there so dishevelled and sick, and shook herself again and again to get rid of the rain. But soon it got just as wet again, and that smarted so in the little wing.

Then the rain grew colder, and soon the drops were white. It was snow that came and the flakes fell faster and faster. Terrified, the lark hopped through the fence, and in between the bushes of the hedge, and sprang further and further, as fast as her tiny feet could move.

By and by she saw a large mound in front of her, with a dark opening on the side of it, and she hopped in there. It was very dark there, so the lark could not see anything at first, but when her eyes became used to the dim light, she found that the hole was the entrance to a long tunnel going inwards. She was now so weak and tired, she stuck her head under the well wing and went to sleep.

When she woke up and tried to look out, no opening was to be found. The snow had fallen deep outside, and a great drift lay over the mound. The lark was shut into the passage!

Dejected, she sat and thought over the situation.

"Perhaps there is a way out on the other side," said she, and began to go forward on the dark path.

After she had walked awhile, the roof grew higher, and she was inside a great cave. There was creeping and crawling on all sides, and the lark, who was now accustomed to the darkness, which was broken only by the glow-worm's pale light, saw that she was in the company of slugs, dew-worms, and such creatures. But farther away, on the other side of the cave, sat the mole and his mate, ruling over the whole, because it was to his court the lark had come.

"Here stands a beggar," said a big slug, poking the lark with his long, sticky horn. "What shall we do with him?" The slug was chief court marshal, and his duty was to preserve order down there.

"We have enough of such," said the mole, lowering his eyebrows. "Come here, I want to talk to you."

The poor lark hopped forward and placed herself before him.

"What is your name and where do you come from?" asked the mole.

"My name is Lark, and I am from the hedge up there."

"Well, I can easily believe that you are one of that pack that travels and tramps over our heads when we walk in the corridors. What are you good for?"

But the lark did not understand what she was to answer.

"She does not understand Your Majesty's language," said the dew-worm. "She is evidently not accustomed to speak with such distinguished folks. Can you dig caves in the ground?"

"No," replied the lark.

"Can you gather ants' eggs, grains of rye, and such things?"

"No, I can only sing," said the lark, looking anxiously around.

"A ballad singer, a musician, a good-for-nothing!" said the mole, scratching his head. And then the whole court did the same.

"What shall we do with her?" inquired the slug.

"Well, she deserves to be put to death and buried in silence," said the mole, "when she can not do her part towards providing the food. But as my former court fool, the lame, tailless field-mouse, is dead, she can have the position. I need some one who can entertain me with merry tricks."

"Did you ever hear of such luck! Twist yourself forward as I do and bow!" said the dew-worm.

But the lark did not know of what her luck consisted, and so did not move.

"Do you not hear that you are allowed to remain here?" said the slug sharply. "You are to have food and house-room in return for singing and entertaining His Majesty's high court. Do you not know enough to say 'thank you,' for it?"

What was the poor little lark to do? She bent her head to the mole, and then wiped away her tears with her wing.

"Sing now," said the court marshal, "and rejoice that the royal family and we will listen to you."

"It is so hard to sing when one is not happy! I cannot," replied the lark.

But the mole was angry now. "Cannot! what kind of nonsense is that? If I give you food and shelter, is it not your duty to sing when I wish? So now, let us hear."

The lark began to think of how the sun shone so clear in summer, and how dark it was here. And so she sang about the sunlight and the blue sky, but that did not suit the company present at all.

"What kind of nonsense and stupidity is that?" asked the mole. "I will not hear such talk about sun and light, for there is no such thing. That is only an old legend that we have outgrown."

The mole and his court had never seen the sun, and so they would not believe that the sunlight existed.

"But I assure you" — began the lark.

"Silence!" said the dew-worm. "You shall not stand here and contradict those who are greater than you. Do you not know that I have been up there hundreds of times, and yet I never saw sun or sky?"

That was true enough, because the dew-worm has no eyes, as you know.

"You must know," said the queen, "that it is forbidden on penalty of death, to tell such untruths here, and if you prize your neck, you will keep quiet about such things."

"Just hear! what kindness and grace!" said the slug. "Thank the gracious queen, who forgives your wicked falsehoods, and now sing. Sing how fine it is here, how much food we have, how kind the noble company is, how the dew-worm creeps; yes, you can sing about me, too, and it will not be too much."

"Yes, sing about them," said the king, "provided you value your life."

It was a difficult thing for the lark to sing about the mole digging caves, the dew-worm crawling, the slug swinging his horn and so on.

"Indeed!" said the mole.

"Indeed!" said the whole court after him.

"Let her take a place among the other servants," said the queen, and so the lark had to eat in the kitchen.

It was an eternity, the lark thought, that she sang songs; she could not know how many days and nights there were, for here the days and nights were alike.

Her longing after the sun and light grew active and strong, but she was not allowed to speak of them without death resulting.

But one time her longing grew too strong; she began to sing about the slug's great horn which she had praised a thousand times before, when all at once she changed — she could not help it — and began to sing of the sun and the light and the soft west wind and the fragrant flowers.

Then there was such a bustle that one who was not there could not imagine it.

"Down with her! She scorns us in our wisdom; sings of what is above, and that towards the end of the nineteenth century," shrieked the moles, slugs, dew-worms and all the other creeping things that burrow in the ground, and they rushed upon the lark.

But she escaped — her wing was healed — and came into the passage through which she had entered the mole's court. She hurried forward, faster and faster.

When she came way out, she saw a ray of light. Her eyes, which were now used to the darkness, were blinded at first, but she soon became accustomed to day again — the beloved day, that grew ever clearer and clearer. Finally she saw a ray of sunlight, then many and many more.

The ice was melted, the snow gone; it was spring, and glowing sunshine.

The lark rose on outstretched wings, with exulting song over the green meadows and blue lakes. But the company which followed the little songstress stopped when it began to be daylight.

"It is too disagreeable here," said the mole, and turned back.

"Yes, she deserved her fate," said the slug. "To think of her having everything so fine, and still to run away, just of conceit!"

"Yes," said the dew-worm, "to try to make us believe that there are such things as sun and sky! One could have laughed at it, if it had not been so annoying."

"And think of coming with such prating in the enlightened nineteenth century," said the mole. "Ha, ha, ha! but she received her deserts for it!"

The whole company laughed at the lark, who wanted to make folks believe such stupidity as that sky and sun existed. They still laugh when they think of it, though it angers them at the same time.

THE LITTLE PLANT.

Away on the edge of the forest stood a little plant, only a hand high, or perhaps still less. But the ground around it was so cold and hard that it could not grow more ; and now it had stood there several years and languished.

"Grow and be beautiful," said the forest sternly, but the plant did not grow.

"Do you not wish to grow?" said the magpie, and then it began to tell the little thing how lazy and useless it was, but it went in at one ear and out of the other.

Still the plant did not grow.

"I will teach you to obey!" roared the wind, and lashed the poor twig with its cold wings, so it came near dying instead of springing up.

"You will surely grow, poor little thing," said the sun so kindly, and poured warm spring rain from the sky, and warmed up the earth around it.

And then the little twig shot up and became a beautiful linden, with leafy crown and fragrant blossoms.

THE FIRST LARK.

THE days were getting longer, the sun mounted higher in the heavens, the snow on the roofs melted away, and here and there a bare spot on the ground showed itself. But winter wished to retain his power as master, and called a good old friend to help him, who drove over the fields and sought to fasten winter's mantle, where the sun's rays had torn it asunder.

He breathed so cold on the bare spots, he struck the trees and bushes with his ice cold wings, and every green blade that tried to peep up through the ground, was instantly killed by his frosty breath.

The flowers, resting in the frozen lap of earth, the brook which was held prisoner under the snow drift, the waves fettered by icy chains, all sighed heavily: "Is Spring not coming?"

And the sigh of the imprisoned ones was borne far to the south, where the earth was already green, the apple-trees bloomed and the spring birds sang. On the dewy turf sat a flock of larks

"What is that?" said one of them. "Who sighs so heavily?"

"It comes on the wind," answered another; "it is Nature up in the north, longing for spring and wailing about winter and the north wind."

"Then we will fly up there," said the one who first spoke; "we will tell them that spring will soon come; we will sing to the flowers, the brook and the waves, so they will get courage to burst their chains."

"No, do not fly!" said one of the others; "the frozen ground has no food for you, winter will blow on you with his ice cold breath, and you will die in the deep drifts."

"But it is a shame for the cold to keep them prisoners; it makes me grieve for those who suffer. I cannot wait. Listen, listen! how full of anguish the sigh is! I must away."

"But then you will die," said the others.

But the lark flew far, far away, up towards the north. At last she came to the place, where from the nest, deeply bedded in the waving rye, she had first seen the golden sun, the blue heavens and the green earth.

But how different everything was now from the time she had last looked upon it. No bird's song was heard; the bare spots were gray and the wounds the sun gave to winter in the daytime were healed by the cold north wind at night. It was so cold, so dismal compared to the life there in the south.

But the lark spread her wings and soared up into the cold, blue air and sung. She sang about the sun and light, about warmth and life, about exulting joy, about freedom and spring. And the tones that came from that warm heart flew out over the earth, over drifts of snow, and forests, over mountains and lakes, and were heard far, far away.

"Oh! listen," said the grass, which waked up from its long winter slumber.

"Hear!" said the flower buds.

"Spring is come," sang the brooks under the drifts.

"The lark is here," rang out from a thousand places. Blade after blade sprang out of the ground, the flowers opened their buds, the birch's small leaves peeped curiously out, the waves tossed the ice angrily against the stones on the shore. The giddy brook hopped out of its prison, he laughed at the snow drifts, he poked fun at the north wind, and pulled the old fence by the beard so boyishly as he sprang by. In vain the north wind blew, in vain the cold breathed; they were not able to quench the awakened life which hour by hour grew stronger, fresher and rejoicing out of the grave where it had rested.

"It is the lark's fault," said winter.

"Yes, she is to blame," said the north wind.

"She shall be punished," said the cold.

"She shall die," said all three.

And when the little songstress laid her tired wings together at night and sank down on the ground, when the sunset and the darkness came, then the enemies of the spring gathered their forces, and when the sun rose again the little bird lay frozen to death on the ground, covered with snow which the north wind had shaken from its flying wings during the night. But Nature called to life, could not be forced down into the grave again — cold, winter and north wind must fly.

There was spring, there was warmth, and exulting delight,
In the vale, o'er the lake, on the summer clad height!

But out beside the spring under the hanging birch-tree, a little patch of lilies of the valley grew high, and the spring flowers sent out their perfume more sweetly there than elsewhere; there the blackbird sings his song full of melancholy joy. Ask the west wind which strokes the birch's green hair why the little spot is lovelier than all others, he will sway the beautiful lily of the valley stalks and say:

"Under this spot rests the first lark."

RAGNHILD AND THE GOBLIN IN FALSKOGS* MOUNTAIN.

A LONG, long time ago in this world, as you well know, Thor rode around and slew giants and mountain goblins with his great hammer wherever he found them. But some of them were so crafty that they hid themselves when Thor came, so he could not find out where they were. Thus many such lived long after folks became Christians — yes, it is certain enough that there are giants and goblins yet, only they do not show themselves nowadays.

In those days (it is now a long time ago), when people had just begun to believe in our Saviour and had forsaken their idols, a priest came to that part of Vestergylln † where Falskogs Mountain stands. This priest was such an one as preached for gold and silver and his own gain, instead of to make people good.

But he wanted to have a church, for there was none to be found there in those days, and the priest said the church should stand on Falskogs

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* Pronounced Fal-skoogs. † Pronounced Vester-yill-en.

Mountain, where it could be seen from all directions, as well as the sun in the heavens.

Late one evening the priest was walking on the mountain, looking for a level spot on which to put the church. After he had walked and hunted a long time, a thick dust rose all about him. He did not pay any attention to it, because he was lost in his thoughts, but in a little while, when he found a good spot, he said aloud:

"Here shall the church stand, and here will I preach about the Christ, so I shall earn both gold and silver by it."

Hardly had he spoken the last word, before a gray old man stood before him. The man was gray in his face, gray in his hair, and gray in his clothes — precisely like the gray stones on the mountain, and one could almost have believed that he was created out of the gray dust that lay so thick round about.

When the priest saw the old man he was overcome with fear, for he knew it was the king of the mountain. So he tried to say some prayers, in order to get rid of the goblin, but before he could begin, the mountain opened under his feet, and both he and the gray old man sank down, as deep as in a bottomless sea.

Now you know that if a person speaks the Saviour's name, and mentions gold and silver at the same time, if there is a goblin living under the spot, it will have power over the person, and so it was now with the priest. Deep down in the mountain, where there was so much gold and silver and precious stones, the priest had to stay forever, so the goblin said.

The priest became very sad over this, and wished to go up again. He knew very well that what goblins most desired was to be wedded to a Christian person, but it was difficult, of course, for a goblin to get such a wife.

Only in case a goblin can be invited to be godfather when a couple baptize their first daughter, can it gain power over her when she becomes fifteen years old. But the goblin cannot take her as long as she is under a roof. The priest and the goblin both knew all this, and the priest promised to arrange it so the goblin should be invited as godfather if only he could come out of the mountain. So the goblin agreed to that, and the priest came up out of the mountain.

At the mountain's foot lay a little cottage, and in it lived some newly married people. The man's name was Göte * and the woman's Birgitta. † Göte was industrious and satisfied with his lot, but Birgitta thought it was very hard to drag along in poverty; and she complained so often that Göte was in despair, especially as she was very ill-tempered towards him, besides.

* Pronounced Yerter. † Pronounced Beer-yitta.

As time went on, the people had a child sent to them, and it was a girl. They were both filled with joy, but soon found a new trouble, because they had no godparents for the child. At last they found a woman who would be godmother, but still a godfather was wanting.

When the priest heard that the poor people had a daughter, he hurried there at once.

"Let me baptize the child," said he. He knew, beforehand, that they had no godfather.

"But we have no godfather," said Göte.

"Ah, I can find a way out of that," the priest at once said. "You can surely invite your neighbor."

"Which neighbor do you mean?" asked the parents.

"Why, your neighbor in Falskogs Mountain," replied the priest.

When the people heard that, they crossed themselves, as they used to do in those days, when danger was near. But the priest said:

"One can have a worse godfather. He can give you a baptismal present that shall make you rich all your days."

When Birgitta heard this, she thought it would be the best thing that could happen, to be rid of poverty, so she said at once:

"Yes, let us invite him in that case!"

But Göte did not wish to have a goblin for a godfather, though he was so poor, but then the priest said again:

"Any one is better than no one, I think, and the worst is for the child not to be baptized. Besides, the goblin will not come here."

"Well, then, we will invite him," said Göte.

As he spoke these words, they heard a horrible sound in the mountain; it sounded like a mass of large stones rolling down the steep sides. But the child was christened and called Ragnhild, and the priest went his way.

Now when night came, it grew all at once as light as day in the cottage, and the people were terribly frightened, for in the middle of the floor, stood the goblin from Falskogs Mountain.

The goblin was gray from head to foot.

A crown of silver with a burning light upon it, sat on his gray hair, and a gray silver belt was around his waist.

"As I was chosen godfather, I will now give my christening present," said the goblin, and then clapped his hands. Four gray pigmies came in bearing a large sieve. They placed the sieve on the floor and took away the cloth that covered it. And the sieve was full of pure gold and silver.

Before the goblin went out, he laid his hand on the little girl's head, and said:

"When you are fifteen years old, I shall come and take you home to the mountain."

As he said this, he immediately disappeared and it grew dark in the cottage; and from the mountain a loud thunder was heard, like that when the goblin was chosen godfather.

When the people awoke in the morning, the sieve full of gold and silver still stood on the floor. Göte wanted to carry it away but Birgitta wanted to keep it, and she had her way, as usual. Now the poor couple lived as rich folks do, and Ragnhild grew up and became so beautiful that no one had seen her equal.

The mother became more and more fond of her child as time went on, and became gentle and pious, so that those who had seen her before could hardly recognize her.

When the day approached for Ragnhild to be fifteen years old, the mother remembered all at once what the mountain king had said, and became very sad and sorrowful, but said nothing to the girl. She watched over Ragnhild on her birthday so she should not go out, and when, near evening, Birgitta had to go away, she fastened all the doors so Ragnhild should not go out of the house.

Ragnhild had had a tame bird of which she was very fond, but it had flown away, several days before. Now when Ragnhild was alone, the bird came back and sat outside the window, singing beautifully. The girl opened the window so he could come in, but when he did not come she hopped out to catch him. The bird flew right before her feet, but always further and further away. Finally he sat on the top of Falskogs Mountain.

At the same time the mother came home. When she saw the window open she knew at once that something wrong had happened. When she looked out she saw Ragnhild standing on the mountain. She wished to call to her, but she was so frightened she could not utter a word.

The evening sun shone beautifully up there and Ragnhild's hair gleamed like gold in its rays. Then a gray mist sprang up beside Ragnhild and out of it stepped the goblin of the mountain. Ragnhild did not see him, however, but mounted to the very summit. Then the mother found her voice and called "Ragnhild."

The girl turned and waved her hands, but instantly the goblin caught them and they both sank in the mountain.

It was a long time before Ragnhild recovered from her fright, but when she could look around her, the gray old man stood beside her, saying: "Look around you! All that you can see here shall be yours, if only you will be mine."

Everywhere, on the walls and the ceiling, shone gold and silver, and the floor was polished as a mirror.

"A time will come," said the mountain king, "when all this shall come up to the light of day;

but then we who belong to the mountain, shall be lords upon earth instead of human beings whom we shall slay."

All this frightened Ragnhild, and she did not wish to belong to the horrible goblin. She tried to run away, but the goblin followed her and they went deeper and deeper into the mountain. Finally, when the goblin was just about to seize her, she picked up a gold rod from the floor and wrote round about her, the name of Jesus, over which the goblin could never come.

The parents grieved greatly over their only child; their grand house became empty and grass grew on the steps and in the garden. Birgitta could never forgive herself for being so persistent about having the goblin for godfather, and her riches were no longer a joy to her.

Every night she went out to the mountain to look for traces of her daughter. One dark evening just when the moon was on the wane and clouds covered the sky, she heard a mysterious sound under the earth. When she knelt down and listened, she thought she recognized her daughter's voice, and she heard right. It was Ragnhild talking with the mountain king.

"Strike out the name," said the goblin, "and you shall rise to great power and honor."

"No; that will I never do," answered the girl.

"Then you shall sit here forever," said the goblin. "If some one should happen to build a church on Falskogs Mountain, and have seven pure and holy maidens dedicate it with singing, then could you be free, and only then. But nobody will ever think to do that."

Then it became quiet down there, but Birgitta had heard what Ranghild and the goblin said.

All the gold and silver that remained of the godfather's gift was used by Göte and Birgitta to build a church out on Falskogs Mountain. But what they built up by day, was torn down by night. Then the workmen began to build at night instead, while they sang holy songs, and by day they rested. Then the goblin had no more power over the building, and soon God's house stood ready, and one beautiful morning, just as the sun ran up, the last stone was laid, and the temple was to be dedicated.

Seven innocent maidens had been chosen to sing psalms, and from both far and near people came to see and hear. But Göte and Birgitta were dressed in the same garments they had worn during the days of their poverty; they had also given the last of the goblin's gold to the builders.

The singing rang out beautifully and clearly, but when the name of Jesus was spoken, the whole mountain shook with a horrible thunder. The floor of the church opened, a mist arose and shone like gold against the ceiling. But when the hypocritical priest who stood by the altar saw it, he cried: "Gold! gold!"

Then he sank through the floor and was never seen again; but when the mist faded away, Ragnhild was seen kneeling by the altar, and her father and mother took her to their home. After her the church was called Ragnhildsdala, though people say Rångedala.*

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* Pronounced Rong-er-dala.

HOW COUNT BONDE * CAME UP IN THE WORLD.

There was once a king, but it is not so easy to say who he was, because it was such a long time ago. Be that as it may, he was out once, traveling, as they used to do a long time ago. As he was in the midst of his journey, he came into so large a forest that he lost his way, because he could not find his way home again. Then he came across a coal hut and peeped in there. There he saw the coal burner, of course, and they fell into conversation, but the king did not say who he was, and the coal man did not know who he was, either. He offered the king food, and as the king was hungry, he agreed to the plan and went in. But he wanted to have two slices of meat on his bread, and the coal burner became wrathy and said that he had eaten ever since he was born, but never had taken two pieces of meat to one piece of bread, and still he was alive; so no one else needed to do it, either.

The king said nothing, but did just as the coal

*** Pronounced Boonder.**

burner wished. After they had eaten and were satisfied, the king began to talk with the man about the state of the country and the people, and about himself into the bargain. The coal burner was not so stupid about what he said, and the king saw that he was very sensible, and too good to be a coal burner, but he said nothing about that to the man, of course. Then he bade the coal burner show him the way out of the woods, and he did so.

The king did not forget the man, and two weeks later or thereabouts, he arranged for an immense banquet, and invited the court people, the nobility and the clergymen — yes, all the fine folks possible, for he was expecting a stranger to whom he wished to do honor, he said.

A few days beforehand he sent out his courtiers and servants with his finest coach, to bring the coal burner. When they met him he was beside the charcoal pit, and when he heard that the king wished to speak to him, he wanted to go home and fix himself up, of course. But the courtiers had received strict orders not to delay, and so he had to go with them just as he was, to Stockholm.

The king himself went out in the courtyard to receive him, and the court ladies were dreadfully curious, you may believe; so they followed the king, who opened the coach door himself.

Then the peasant put out one leg, and as he had come from the coal hut, he had his wooden shoes and leather apron on. The young ladies began to shriek and clasp their hands.

"Never have we seen the like!" said they.

"Well, here can you look on the like," said the peasant, and put out the other leg; and they were startled enough at sight of such a stranger.

But the king appeared as if it was all right, and the peasant was seated next to the king.

The peasant now put as much on his bread as he liked; but then the king said to him, that no one ought to put two pieces on one slice. This made it clear to the peasant that it was the king who was at his hut in the woods.

Finally all were satisfied with feasting, and the king thought they might play games, so he gave his right-hand neighbor a box on the ear.

"Pass that along," said the king, so it went from one to another, till it came to the peasant who sat beside the king, and who must pass the blow to the lord of the land himself. But when the coal burner had received the box on his ear, he turned and said:

"My father was a farmer, he was, and when he came to a ditch, he turned his plough and went back the same way." Whereupon he returned the box on the ear to the one who had passed it to him, and escaped striking the king.

When the game was over, the king brought out the grandest things, made of gold and precious stones, and asked if any one knew what was worth more than all of them. But everybody remained silent, because nobody could guess such a thing. Then the peasant said, when he saw no one was bright enough to make an answer:

"I know well enough what is worth more, and that is a good midsummer rain;" and all who heard that, thought he spoke the truth.

The king thought that when the countryman was shrewdest among them all, he could also be as good as any of them; so he made up his mind to dub the coal burner to a Count. So he took his great sword and struck him on the shoulder, first once, afterward twice and last of all three times.

But as the king was striking the third blow, the coal burner hiccoughed, so he could be heard over the whole room.

"Why do you behave like that?" asked the king.

"Oh!" said the peasant, "when the Count shall in, the peasant must out."

But because he had behaved like a peasant, he was obliged to be named peasant (Bonde). And his sons became great men and his daughters the finest ladies.

And that is the way it happened that Count Bonde rose in this world.

THE ASHBOY.

THERE was once a king who ruled over a great country. He had many splendid possessions, among them three meadows which were the most beautiful one could wish to see, but so bewitched, that all that went there, be it man or beast, vanished forever from sight. The king was very sad over it and gave out a promise, that he who could remove the spell of witchery, should have his youngest daughter for his wife.

Then there came one stately prince after the other, for many wanted to have the princess, who was as lovely as a rose; but when they tried to drive the cows on the meadows, not one of them came back, neither princes nor cattle. No one knew what became of them, and finally, no one dared go there, of course, when it was so fearfully bewitched.

At that time, there lived a woman with three sons, in a cottage in the woods. The two eldest of them were very strong fellows and took care of themselves, but people thought the youngest was good for nothing, so he was allowed to saunter about. But he liked best to sit in the chimney corner, so he was called the Ashboy.

When it was heard all over the kingdom what the king had promised, it came also to the ears of the Ashboy. So he said to his mother, one day:

"Put up a little luncheon for me, mother, for I am going out on a journey."

"Where do you think of going, you witch?" said the mother.

"Oh! I am going to look around me," said he.

"You can go with what you have," said his mother, so he had to go empty-handed.

After he had traveled a long distance, he came to the king, and made known his errand.

"So, so, my boy," said the king, "you will turn herdsman?"

"Yes," said the boy; "I wish to try it."

"Well, then, to-morrow you shall take a cow with you, which you can tend on the first meadow," replied the king.

The next day the boy took a little hammer in his pocket and drove his cow out to pasture. When he came into the meadow, he did not feel afraid, but seated himself on the fence and began to sing as loud as he could. In a little while, a big giant came towards him and was going to kill him; but the boy took up his hammer and struck the giant in the middle of his forehead, so his head split open, and then he died, of course.

"I wonder if he can have anything in his pocket," thought the Ashboy, and he found a big key and a whistle there. Now he begun to think hard over what these could mean, and as he wandered along, he came to a great copper palace. He tried the key in the lock and it fitted. He opened the door but did not see any human being, so he took the pipe and blew, and immediately people came from all directions and asked:

"What do you command, great king? Do you wish to put on your armor? Will you review your regiment?"

"Yes; that was my meaning," said the boy; so they brought forward a grand suit which shone like the stars, which he put on. Then he went over the castle and gathered his regiments.

"You have my thanks," said he finally. "Come whenever I need you."

Then he took the cow and went to the king. "You are a brave boy, you," said the king; "not many have done as you have, before. To-morrow you shall have two cows and go to the second meadow."

The boy did the same as the day before, and a giant came out, who was even larger than the one that had been killed. But his fate was the same as his comrade of the first meadow, and the boy found a key and a whistle in his pocket, also. When the Ashboy opened the door of this giant's castle, which was of silver, and blew on the whistle, many people came forward and asked:

"What do you command, great king? Will you put on your armor, and summon your regiments?"

"Yes; bring them forward," said the boy.

So they clothed him in a suit that shone like the moon; and a great regiment marched forward.

Then the boy said:

"You have my thanks. Come when I need you."

The boy then took his two cows and went home as before.

The king was very much pleased now, as you must know, and the next morning the boy received three cows which he was to take to the third meadow.

"May it go well with you, my boy!" said the king, "because no one has ever come back from that meadow."

"I shall be sure to come back," said the Ashboy.

As the boy sat on the fence, there came a giant who was so supernaturally tall, that no one can imagine one taller.

"Who are you, and what are you doing on my meadow?" roared he, so the woods rang with echoes. "Now you shall die, you minion."

"Wait a minute, till I hear the reason," answered the boy, and then he struck the giant in the forehead, so he died just as the other two had done; and the boy found a key and a whistle in his pocket, too.

After he had walked awhile, he came to a gold palace. Here he received a suit of armor that shone like the sun, and he found a regiment even larger than the others. When the boy had reviewed them, he said as before:

"You have my thanks. Come when I need you."

Now the boy had become king over three kingdoms, and earned the princess, besides, and there was the loudest rejoicing at the castle when he came home with all three cows. But the Ashboy did not tell any one what had happened in the forest.

The king now prepared a wedding for all three princesses, for the eldest two had also found suitors, and each couple received a gold apple as a wedding present.

But the Ashboy was scorned by his brothers-in-law, and was not allowed to live in the castle at all, but in a little cottage way out in the forest. But he and the princess were fond of each other, and so were happier than all the rest.

By and by there was war in the land. Then the king said to his sons-in-law:

"Now you must help me, for I am old and not able to fight alone."

"May I go with you to battle?" asked the Ashboy.

"Poh! what good can you do?" said the brothers-in-law; "we shall only be disgraced by you."

"Oh! I will manage that," said the Ashboy.

So he took an old horse and followed them. But when he came to a mud-hole in the road, the horse fell down.

"Look! see where he is lying," said the brothers-in-law, laughing.

"Help me and my horse up," screamed the Ashboy.

"Yes; when we come back," answered they, and rode away.

After the brothers-in-law had turned a bend in the road, the Ashboy rode to the copper castle, dressed himself in the fine armor and took his regiment with him. He rode past the others on the road, and when they came up to the battle field, the enemy had been slain for a long time.

The brothers-in-law did not recognize the Ashboy, but they could not look enough at the stately warrior, and one of the brothers gave him his gold apple out of gratitude for his assistance.

The Ashboy ran ahead, and sent his army to the castle; when the brothers-in-law came to the mud-hole, there he stood trying to get the horse out.

"See, it was just as we said," cried they, when they caught sight of him; "you staid here till we came back."

Finally he succeeded in getting the old horse on its feet, and followed the others, the king and his two distinguished sons-in-law home.

After a short time had passed away, war broke out again. Then the king asked his sons-in-law for help again, because the enemy was much stronger than the first time, so the battles would be more severe.

The Ashboy was not allowed to go this time, but he followed on his poor old horse, and fell into the mud-hole as before. After the king and his army were out of sight, the Ashboy hurried to the silver castle and took his second army with him. He rode past the others with his warriors, and when they came up the enemy was already conquered.

Now the king and his sons-in-law hardly knew how they should thank him, who had saved them, but after many bows and fine phrases, he received the second gold apple.

When they came to the mud-hole, there stood the Ashboy struggling with the horse again, for his army were long before in the silver castle.

"Ha! there you still stand," said they, laughing at him. "But we have seen something so grand, that you will never see the like!"

"Oh! that may be," said the Ashboy, and finally got the horse on his feet again.

But now there was war for the third time, for the neighboring nations were very quarrelsome.

Then the king thought that he should surely be lost, because the king who was his enemy this time, was the most powerful in the whole world, almost, and so it looked bad for the old king.

When they marched out from the castle to battle, the Ashboy followed as usual, but it went just as badly with him this time as before. After the king and his sons-in-law had ridden away and left him, the Ashboy went to the gold castle, put on his armor, and took his regiment with him. As he rode past the others on the road, they thought surely it was the sun riding by, it shone so.

This time he stood still with his warriors till the others came up, for he thought they might as well feel what war was like. But it went badly for the old king, and he came near falling into the enemy's grasp. Then the Ashboy let his people begin to cut and slash, and the enemy soon saw different doings and thought it was not worth while to try longer to conquer.

The king rode forward to the shining warrior, whom he did not recognize at all, and said:

"You are a king that never misses fire, as I do, and so I give you my hand and thank you."

But that was not enough, so he gave him a gold apple that was even more beautiful than those he had given his sons-in-law.

The Ashboy sent his troops away right after this, and when the other army rode home, he stood by the mud-hole with his tumble-down old horse.

"Look at him!" cried his brothers-in-law. "There he stands with his frisky colt. We have a different story to tell. We have seen something grander than you will ever see."

"No! what was it?" asked the Ashboy.

"Well, it was a warrior who shone like the sun, for he was clad in pure, glittering gold," said the others.

"Well, I may just as well see him sometime, too," said the Ashboy.

A little while after this the Ashboy wished to find out what kind of hearts his brothers-in-law had. So he made a great party and invited the king and the others to it, but they did not come, for they thought the Ashboy's house was too poor for them. His wife, the youngest princess, was so grieved over this that she began to cry. But the Ashboy said:

"If you will not cry you shall see something fine."

Then he took her with him, first to the copper castle, then to the silver one, and finally to the gold castle. Then she was clothed in the finest of robes, like the first of queens. After that the Ashboy put on his gold armor and rode to the king.

There was great excitement at the castle when they saw so grand a lord coming, especially as the king and all the others recognized him as the one who had helped them in battle.

After they had greeted him as distinguished people do, the Ashboy said:

"I have heard that you were invited to your youngest son-in-law's, but would not go."

"I was willing enough, but my other sons-in-law would not allow me to do so," said the king, "for they think he is not distinguished enough."

"That was shameful of them," said the Ashboy, "but as I am going there no one can think it is beneath them."

Both the king and his other sons-in-law thought that there was nothing else to be done, when so great a lord did not consider himself too good to go there, so they went, too. But the Ashboy went first, alone.

But the one who acted as guide rode before them till they came to the copper castle, and the king and his sons-in-law thought they had never seen anything so grand before. The people here said his lord and ladyship had gone to the silver castle.

When the travelers came to the silver castle, they were astounded at so much grandeur; but here the people said that their lord and lady had gone to the gold castle, so the guide rode thither and the royal party rode after.

But when they reached it they were completely overcome, for they had never thought there was so much magnificence in the world; and the best and finest of all three castles was gathered here.

And the king and all his train immediately recognized the youngest princess, who was clothed in robes of gold; but no one thought the grand knight could be the Ashboy. Then he brought out all three of the gold apples he had received, and they could not help believing him when he related everything that had happened.

The king and the sons-in-law suddenly became very obsequious to the Ashboy, who prepared the finest banquet they had ever attended.

After that time the Ashboy and his queen lived in the gold castle, and he reigned as king over all three kingdoms till he died, after which they were inherited by his children.

HOW TRÅFVA* CHURCH WAS BUILT.

WHEN the people of the parish of Vestergylln were going to build a church at Tråfva, there was a fearful quarrel about where the church should stand. The best and most sensible men lived then as now, on the south side of the river, and they wanted the church on their side. On the north bank there lived only bad people, who were in league with hobgoblins and wizards, yes, some even thought they were on good terms with the Evil One himself. And they insisted with all their might and main, that the church should stand on their side.

So many parish meetings were called and much talking was done, but they could not come to any decision about it.

At last the peasants wrote to the king and asked him to settle the matter.

He took the part of the sensible peasants who wanted the church on the south side of the river, and had it down in writing, too.

Now the other peasants were obliged to agree to this, and all helped drag home timber and such things as are needed for building a church.

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* **Pronounced Tro-ver.**

They kept on gathering materials for two years before they begun to build. After that, when the foundation was to be dug and laid, the peasants on the north side said they knew well enough where the church was to stand.

Now when the south side peasants woke up one morning, they saw a pile of timber on the other side of the river, and when they looked into the matter, they found it had been carried from their side. They began about as quickly as possible to carry it back again, on an oak raft, for in those days there was no bridge over the river. The next night the timber was dragged over the river again, and the day following, the south side peasants dragged it home again.

Now a couple of peasants stood watch to see who it was that carried away the timber. After awhile, the timber began to crack, and when they looked at it, they saw a whole crowd of hobgoblins dragging the building materials down to the river and over to the other side.

At first the peasants were a little afraid, but soon they plucked up courage to ask who had given them leave to act in that way. Then they were surrounded with hobgoblins on all sides, and received such blows and boxes on the ears that they were glad to take to their heels.

Then they all agreed, those peasants on the south side, to club together and try to drive out the hobgoblins when they came again.

But when the peasants went out, the whole river was full of sea nymphs and hobgoblins, so they did not dare to go near them.

The hobgoblins were allowed to drag the timber over as fast as they wanted to, and the peasants on the south were obliged to join and help build the church on the north bank of the river. Afterwards, while it was building, they heard shouts from the river the whole time:

"*Trår won, trår won, trår won!*"* (Meaning *trollar* or witches won.)

From this the church got its name and was called Tråfva, and the parish is called Tråfva parish to this day.

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* Pronounced Trore.

KRÅKPELSA.*

(*The Swedish version of Cinderella.*)

HAVE you ever heard about Kråkpelsa? She was a human being, like other folks, though people did think she was so stupid that she was good for nothing.

Once the people in the house where she lived, went to church to see a wedding, and as somebody had to stay at home, it was Kråkpelsa, of course. As she sat alone after they had gone, she became very unhappy. But just then there came a witch out of the mountain, and she thought it was not right for the girl to sit alone so, but took her and dressed her in a white gown and made her look wonderfully fine; then she sent her to the church. The people in the church did not recognize her, but thought she was so grand that they forgot to look at the bridal pair. But when they came out of the church, they were lost in amazement, for there stood her horse waiting for her, and she sprang to its back as lightly as a cat, saying:

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* Pronounced Croak-pelsa.

"White before me, black behind me, none shall see where they can find me!"

When the people came home, Kråkpelsa sat in the same place as when they went; and they could not talk of anything else but the person they had seen at the church.

The next Sunday the whole family went to church again, and Kråkpelsa had to stay at home. They thought that perhaps she might try to follow them; so they threw a box of salt in the ashes, and told her to pick it out. As she sat there weeping over this difficult task, the mountain witch came in again, and this time clothed Kråkpelsa finer than before. She put silver shoes on her feet and her dress was made of silver threads.

She then rode to church again, and every single one turned and twisted the head so to look at her, they all came near forgetting where they were. But when she came out, she did the same as the first time, and no one knew where she went. Then they planned a trap to catch her, and so they put a piece of tar on the threshold where she would get fastened in it.

Now when Sunday came the same thing happened. Kråkpelsa was to stay at home and pick up a box of peas out of the ashes. But she had not been alone long, before the old witch came in and dressed her so magnificently that there was never anything equal to it. Her shoes were of pure gold and so was her dress. But just think! when she came out of the church she was so careless as to step on the tar, and so one shoe remained fastened in it! and every one was eager to see the shoe, for it was so peculiar and so small. Among the people there, was a prince, and he said the one whom the shoe fitted should become his bride.

It was not so easy to become a princess, however, because no matter how they pinched and pushed, the shoe was too small for them all.

But the woman where Kråkpelsa lived was so terribly anxious to have one of her daughters wedded to a prince, that she cut the heels and toes off one of them, the cruel creature! and then the shoe went on and the girl was to be the prince's bride, and they all set out for the church where the priest was to marry them.

As they were riding along, the birds sitting in the forest sang: "Mangled heel, mangled toes! home sits the true one, every bird knows!"

"What are they saying in the woods?" asked the prince.

"Oh! that is only the birds singing," said the one who was to be his bride.

The prince thought something was wrong, and so he rode back; but he could not find any one that the shoe fitted, for the wicked woman had found out that the shoe fitted Kråkpelsa and had hidden her under a tub in the garden.

When the prince could not find her, he thought the girl had told him the truth, and they started for the priest again. But now a voice sounded from every bush, louder than before: "Mangled heel, mangled toe! in the garden hidden, as you should know!"

Then the prince went back again, and made a thorough search of the garden. Finally he found Kråkpelsa under the tub; the shoe fitted her, as we all know. Kråkpelsa became a regular princess, and neither the wicked woman nor her daughter got anything for their trouble.

THE WISE DOG.

In a little village lived a poor couple who had two children, a boy and a girl. When the parents died, the children were to divide what was left, and that was only a cow and a dog. In those days a brother inherited more than a sister, so the boy took the cow and the dog was left for the girl. She cried and moaned and said:

"How can I live with nothing but a dog?" But there was no help for it; she did not get more. Those were the days when animals could talk, so when the girl was left alone with the dog, he said:

"Do not grieve, dear girl, but take me with you and we will go out and wander in the world."

After they had gone some distance they came to a store. Then the dog said: "Now you must go in and ask for cloth for three dresses."

When the cloth was measured off, the dog took a gold coin he had picked up on the road and laid it on the counter. Then he took the cloth in his mouth and ran with it to the dressmaker, and she made three fine dresses.

Then he did the same at the shoemaker's, and so the girl had shoes.

After they had walked a long time they came to a great king's castle, and the dog told the girl she must beg to stay there over night. The girl did so, and the queen had a bed of straw made for her in a chamber. After she had lain down, the dog said:

"When they come in to-morrow morning with coffee, you must say that you think you must have been lying on peas, because you are so lame all over that you are not able to get up."

And when the maid servant came in, the girl said what the dog had told her. Then the maid servant told the queen she thought it must be a real princess, when she was so sensitive.

Now there was a young prince in the castle, and when he saw the girl, he thought she was more beautiful than any one he had ever seen, and he wished to marry her. But the king and queen wished to know first what sort of a person she was; but they did not succeed, for the dog said:

"You must not say whether you are high or low born, rich or poor." And the girl did as he said.

When the queen could not find out where the girl came from, she said:

"We will let her walk through the green alley; it is muddy there, and if she lifts up her dress, she is of common folks, but if she lets it drag, as we do, then is she of distinguished family."

But the girl followed the dog's advice once more, and walked along without looking at her feet, so the dress dragged in the mud. Then all saw clearly, that the girl was a great man's daughter, and they consented to the marriage which the prince so much desired. But they wished first to visit her home, so the dog said:

"Now the king and queen are going to your home; let them go, but follow my advice and do not tell them a thing."

The dog ran ahead, and soon he met a shepherd tending sheep.

"If any one asks you who is the owner of the sheep, you must say they belong to the young bride to be," said the dog to the shepherd. "If you do that, you shall have a silver knife and fork."

The shepherd promised to do as the dog said.

Then he met a shepherd tending goats, then one tending cows, and finally, one with horses; and to all of them he said the same as to the first one; and the court people were amazed at the possessions of the princess.

At last the dog came to a fine great castle, where a giant lived, and he was the one who owned all the cattle they had seen on the way.

"What do you want?" said the giant, and was going to eat up the dog.

"If I were you, I should rather eat up the maiden who is dancing behind you," said the dog.

Then the giant forgot himself and looked back and caught sight of the sun, which was just that instant rising. And then he flew all to pieces, for giants cannot look on the sun and live. The dog then carried away the remains of the giant and put everything in order to receive the king's train, and they were all very glad, but especially the girl, when they heard that the stately castle belonged to her.

Now everything was arranged so well, the dog said to the girl:

"I have served you faithfully, now you must do me a service. Will you promise to do it, no matter what it is?"

Yes, the girl promised solemnly to do it.

"Take a little block, an ax and a stick and follow me to the grove over yonder," said the dog.

The girl did as the dog told her. When they had reached the grove, the dog said:

"Now chop off my head, stir the blood in the spring, and then throw my body into it."

"That would be repaying your service very badly," replied the girl. "I cannot do it!"

"You must do what I tell you," said the dog, "else a great misfortune will befall me. Afterwards stand beside the spring a few minutes, and you will see what will happen."

Well, there was no help for it, and with streaming eyes, the girl did as the dog commanded her.

But when she had stood beside the spring several minutes, the water began to bubble and rise, and up came the most beautiful prince one could wish to see. He said that once when he was out wandering, he came to the castle and the giant bewitched him and changed him into a dog. If the girl had not chopped off his head, he would never have escaped from the spell, but would have remained a dog to the end of the world. When he went up to the castle with the princess, there was great rejoicing, you can believe.

THE PRINCE WHO FOUND THE MIRROR OF YOUTH.

MANY years ago there lived a king who had three sons; he thought a great deal of the eldest two, but the youngest was as good as forgotten, so he was out in the woods and fields nearly all day long.

When the king had grown quite old, his health failed him, and he longed to be strong again, of course; and he could become so, if only he could look into the mirror of youth, so the court doctor had said; but neither he nor any one in the land, knew where that mirror was to be found.

Then the king told his eldest two sons that they must go out into the world and try to find the mirror of youth for him, and they set out at once.

Then the youngest son begged that he might go out and search with them, and finally he was allowed to go, for the king thought he was of no use at home, so he might as well go out into the world.

After the three brothers had traveled three days, they came to a place where the road divided into two, and there sat a rat on a stump.

"Go to the left, go to the left," it piped to the princes. The road to the left was narrow, stony and hilly, and full of difficulties, but the one to the right was the royal highway.

"What nonsense you talk!" said the eldest prince. "Is that the road for a prince?" His next brother thought as he did, so they rode out to the right.

"Go to the left, go to the left," piped the rat.

The youngest prince, who rode last, thought that the rat gave good advice, perhaps, so he followed it and rode to the left. The way was hard and troublesome, but the prince did not mind that, so he rode on. When he had ridden three days and three nights, he came to a hut where an old woman was standing on the steps.

"Good day, dear mother," said the prince in greeting. "Can you tell me where I can find the mirror of youth?"

"That know I not," said the old woman, "but I will ask the trees."

With this she blew on a pipe, and all the trees of the forest gathered around, and she asked them about the mirror of youth, but not a tree knew anything about it.

"My sister lives further on," said the old woman. "She has power over all the beasts of the field; perhaps she may know something about it."

The prince said farewell and rode three days and three nights more, and the road grew worse than before. Finally he came to another hut and there stood an old woman, older than the first.

"Good day, dear mother," said the prince. "Can you tell me where the mirror of youth is to be found?"

"That know I not," said the woman, "but I will ask the beasts of the field."

Then she blew on a pipe and all the beasts of the field gathered around, but not one knew anything about the mirror of youth.

"My sister lives further on," said the woman. "She has power over all the birds of the air; perhaps she knows something about it."

The prince said farewell and rode on. But now the road grew worse — yes, so bad, that no one ever saw such a road, and the prince was almost tired out. But at last he came to a hut where an old woman stood on the steps. And the old woman was very old, yes, so old, that she must have lived a hundred years, and more besides.

"Good day, grandmother," said the prince. "Can you tell me where the mirror of youth is to be found?"

"That know I not," said the aged woman, "but I will ask the birds of the air."

So she blew on her pipe, and all the birds of the air gathered around, but not one knew anything about the mirror.

"Perhaps the eagle knows something," said the sparrow. "He is not here yet."

Then the eagle came.

"Do you know where the mirror of youth is to be found?" asked the woman.

"Yes, that I know," replied the eagle. "It hangs in Giant Ironhand's castle, but no living being dares go there, for not one of them who have gone there has ever come back."

"But I dare to go there, I do," said the prince, "if only you will show me the way."

"If you will go, then seat yourself on my back," said the eagle; "but blame yourself for whatever may happen." And so the prince mounted the eagle's back, and they sailed away through the air — far, far away. When, after three days and three nights, they found the castle, the eagle said:

"The mirror you are seeking hangs in the farthest wing of the palace. On the mirror's edge sits a drop which shines like clearest crystal. If your hand should tremble ever so little, the drop will fall off, and your luck will vanish. In order to come out of the palace alive, do not touch a single thing, but come out immediately with the mirror, so we can fly away, for the Giant Ironhand will wake up soon."

The prince promised to do as the eagle said, and then he went into the palace, through many, many halls and rooms. Finally he came into a large hall, and there hung the mirror over a couch. The prince took down the mirror, and the drop which shone so clearly shook, and came near falling, and if the prince had trembled ever so little, it would have done so.

As the prince was going out, he happened to see that the most beautiful princess he had ever beheld was lying on the couch. He stopped and looked at her, and she was so marvelously beautiful that the prince forgot what the eagle had told him, and bent down and touched her cheek. The instant he did this, a sound like a pistol shot met his ear, but the prince did not think that was dangerous, so his hand did not tremble at all.

After he had looked at the princess a little while, he thought he would like to stroke her golden ringlets, so he did so. But now it sounded in his ear like a strong rifle shot. Just think! the prince was not frightened a particle and the drop remained sitting on the mirror. But the prince was not able to leave the princess before he had kissed her hand, and so he did that, of course. But now he seemed to hear the worst cannon shot.

"I believe it sounds louder each time," said the prince, and then he remembered that the eagle was waiting outside.

When the prince came out, the eagle had abandoned all hope; but when it saw the drop on the edge of the mirror, it became cheerful again, took the prince on its back, and set out at a rapid pace. It was high time, for the giant came out and threw great stones after them, but did not hit them, for they were so far away that the giant could not sight them right.

As they now came to the sea, the eagle shot like an arrow into the water, so the prince's feet were under the waves.

"Are you frightened?" asked the eagle.

"My heart beats a little louder," said the prince.

"Just so frightened was I when you touched the princess's cheek," said the eagle.

By and by the eagle shot down into the water so deep that the prince was under the waves up to his waist.

"Were you frightened?" asked the eagle.

"Yes; I was a little startled," said the prince.

"Just so frightened was I when you stroked the princess's ringlets," said the eagle.

Now when the eagle had flown a little further, he dipped down for the third time, so the water came up to the prince's ears.

"Were you frightened?" asked the eagle.

"Yes; I was so terribly frightened, you could have bought me for a farthing."

"Just so frightened was I when you kissed the princess's hand," said the eagle.

After they had traveled three days and three nights, they came to the eldest of the three old women, and there the prince thanked the eagle for its pleasant company on the journey, and thanked the old woman for her trouble, and then rode home to the castle.

When he reached it, the two elder brothers were already there, but neither of them had found the mirror, of course. But when it was found that the youngest prince had it, he was much honored, and looked upon as a good-for-nothing no longer; and when the king saw himself in the mirror he became strong again.

But the princess, whom the prince kissed, had lain in an enchanted sleep, which was now broken by the prince, and she escaped from the giant. When she came home, the king and queen in the kingdom were dead, to her great sorrow, for they were her father and mother. She had to reign now every day, from morning to night, and it was very fatiguing. Then she wished so much to marry, but she wished to have a prince who was a brave man. Then she remembered the one who had kissed her in the giant's castle, and she thought:

"I will have that one!"

But first she wished to test him, so she took her whole army and began to make war upon the prince's father; so it was dreadful; and as his kingdom was smaller than that of the princess, he drew all his troops within the city, for it had both walls and towers.

Then the princess sent a message to the king that he must send his son out to her, and they would sign a declaration of peace. She had the finest red cloth laid from the city gate to her throne, and strewed gold rings on it. And half-way there she had warriors stationed, who kept up a terrible firing over the path covered by the red cloth.

First came the eldest prince. He thought it was a pity to ride on the red cloth, so let his horse go beside it; and when he noticed the gold rings, he picked up as many as he could and put them in his pocket. But when he saw how fearfully the soldiers were firing, he grew frightened and rode into the woods.

Then the king sent the second son in order. He rode on the cloth and did not mind the rings, but when he came to where the soldiers were firing, he, too, became frightened, and rode to the woods, as his brother had done.

Last of all, the youngest prince rode out. He rode on the cloth, so it flew into small bits, and the gold rings hopped; and when he came to the warriors, who were firing, he rode past them like a whirlwind, and did not wink once, when the balls piped around his ears.

When he caught sight of the princess, he recognized her immediately, and jumped off his horse. Then he sprang up on the throne, fell on his knees and kissed the princess's hand.

"This is the right one," said the princess, and so made peace with the king, but he and the queen got their heads all in a whirl, trying to have the wedding ready as soon as the prince and princess wished to have it. But afterwards they lived happily all their days.

THE PEASANT WIFE WHO WAS SO DISCONTENTED.

There was once a peasant, who had a wife; and she was so discontented with everything they had that she complained all the time and grew very cross. When she went out into the farmyard and looked at their cows, she thought they were miserable creatures compared to other cows. When she sat with her husband to eat, she thought the food and the plates were wretched, that the kitchen was too small and the fields not large enough. She wanted everything as good as the richest in the parish, you may believe.

One Christmas Eve, there came walking into the kitchen, a woman who looked very peculiar. It was no other than the old witch who had her abode in the high hill over beyond the pasture.

The old peasant woman was standing beside the stove, cooking Christmas porridge and muttering as usual, of course. But the witch, who was one of the good-natured sort, spoke to the peasant couple and said:

"As long as Lisa here"—that was the old

peasant woman, you must know — "is not satisfied with the way things are, you may wish for three things and you shall have them. But think well for eight days before you wish for the first, so you may wish wisely." With this the witch disappeared.

Lisa was beside herself with delight, you may know, and pondered all Christmas Eve and Christmas day over what she should wish for herself. But at night, when she put the potatoes on the supper table, she thought the sausages were not good enough for her, so she said:

"If only a body had a fine, great sausage!" and immediately a great sausage appeared on the platter before her. But this made the old man angry to see her so dissatisfied, so he said:

"I wish the sausage were hanging on your nose, I do!" At once the sausage was hanging on Lisa's nose, and the old man was not strong enough to pull it off.

Now, for the first time they remembered, that they had already made two wishes, and so had only one left. But what good would it do the old woman to be ever so rich, if she had to go around with a sausage hanging on her nose all her days?

So the old man was obliged to wish the sausage off again, and then they were just as rich as they were to start with, as any one can guess.

THE TWELVE ENCHANTED PRINCESSES.

MANY years ago there reigned a king who had twelve daughters and when he consulted a wise old woman, to know if he should not have a son, she said:

"There will be only the twelve princesses and if they go out under the open sky before the youngest one is fifteen years old, the goblin will steal them all."

The king believed the old woman, so he decided to have the princesses well watched; he placed a guard over each one of them and gave them strict orders not to let their charges go out.

So they were kept indoors till the day before the youngest one was fifteen years old; but that day it was such beautiful weather and the sun shone so brightly over the garden, that they begged for dear life to be allowed to go out. At first the guardians said no, but at last gave their consent to their walking a short time in the garden. To make sure they were safe, each guardian took a princess by the hand. But as soon as they were out of doors, there came a great cloud and all the princesses disappeared. The guardians were terrified, as was natural, and eleven of them fled to the woods; only the twelfth remained behind and told the king what had happened. Then the king had word given out in all the churches, that those who could find the princesses should also marry them.

Now, in the neighboring country there lived a king who had twelve sons. The youngest one went to the other king and asked him if he would fulfill the promise he had made.

"Yes," said the king, "I surely will."

"We are twelve brothers at home," said the prince, "and we intend to go out and seek the princesses."

The king now fitted out a large ship with everything necessary, and the princes sailed out on the angry sea.

"Which way shall we steer?" asked the captain.

"Let the ship go where the wind will blow it," said the youngest prince.

After they had sailed this way for a while, the food began to give out. Then the youngest prince went up into the tallest mast and saw a high mountain away to the south, and he bade the captain steer in that direction. When they reached the mountain the youngest prince said they must go ashore; but his brothers would not do this, and told him he might go alone, as long as he had arranged the journey.

So the youngest prince went ashore and came to a great garden; as he went in through the gate, he saw eleven pillars of the most beautiful mother-of-pearl. The prince kept on and entered a room where there were four silver doors. He went straight ahead, and came to a room where a lovely princess sat sewing. When she saw the prince, she was both glad and sorry, and said:

"How does it happen that you are here?"

"I am searching for twelve stolen princesses," said he.

"I am the youngest of them," said she, "and the eleven pillars of mother-of-pearl are my sisters. But the mountain king who stole us will come home soon and he will kill you."

"Can you not think of an escape?" said the prince.

"Creep under the bed, but listen carefully to what he says."

Very soon the whole ground shook, and the mountain king came in. Then the princess pricked her finger, so some drops of blood fell on the floor.

"I smell Christian blood," said the giant.

"That is because I pricked my finger," said the princess.

The giant tasted the blood and called for food. After he had eaten he lay down and slept. When he had been asleep awhile, the princess thrust her elbow into his side, so he awoke.

"What is that?" asked the giant.

"I thought some one was coming to take your life," said the princess.

"Oh! there is no danger," said the giant.

By and by she struck him in the side again, harder than the first time.

"What is it now?" asked the giant.

"Now I hear plainer still that some one is coming to kill you."

After he fell asleep again, she pushed him with all her might, in his side.

"Now, what is it again? Cannot you let me sleep in peace?" asked the giant.

"Now I am certain that some one is going to kill you," said she, "and I cannot keep quiet."

"There is no danger," said he, "for the one who can take my life, must first find my heart, and that lies in an egg; the egg lies in a duck, the duck lies in a pond, the pond lies in a great church, the church lies on an island, and the island lies in a lake of blood."

Now he was allowed to sleep in peace, and when daylight came, he went away.

"Did you hear that there is no help for me?" asked the princess.

"But I shall try," said the prince. So she gave him three ducats and a penknife, and he went his way.

Towards evening he came to a little hut in the forest, and there lived a woman with a nose so long that she could shut the door with it. The woman was kind-hearted, and the moment she saw the prince she said:

"So, so! a prince is coming this way. You have undertaken a hard task, and I cannot do much for you, but further on, in the woods, lives a sister of mine, who can do more, perhaps."

In the morning when he was going on with his journey, she gave him a bird whose name was Frost.

"That may be useful to you on the way," said the woman. "But when you come back, I want it again."

Then the prince gave her a ducat and went on. In the evening he came to the second woman, and she had a nose so long that she could lift the saucepan off with it.

"You have been at my sister's, I see," said she, "and as she has given you her help, I will give you mine, too."

So she gave him a bird called Thaw.

"It will be of use to you on the way," said she. "But when you come back, I want it again. My other sister lives further on in the forest; she is wiser than I and can help you more than I can."

So the prince gave her a ducat, too, and went on. That evening he came to a woman whose nose was so long that she could use it for a whip. She said to the prince:

"Now are you soon there, for close by lies the lake, and as my sisters have helped you, so will I. You shall have a bird called Pursuer, but I want it back, when you come again."

Then the prince gave her the last ducat and went his way.

After he came to the lake, he did not know what to do first, but thought he would try with Frost. So he called the bird, and the lake froze so he could go over.

"Frost before me, and Thaw behind me," he then said, and the ice thawed after he had stepped over it. Finally he came up on the island and saw the church.

After he had gone in, he saw a locked door in front of the pond. When he tore this open, the duck flew out.

"Fly after, Pursuer," said the prince, and Pursuer flew after the duck and caught it. When the prince took the duck in his hand, he cut it open, took out the egg and put it in his pocket. When that was done, he went back the way he had come, left the birds and thanked the owners for the loan.

When he came back to the princess, she asked:

"Well, what success have you had?"

"Oh! it is just as it is," said the prince.

"Then have pity on us, for the mountain king is coming, and he will kill you. Hurry away!" said she.

"Oh! it is not so dangerous," said the prince, putting his arms around the princess.

"Oh! do not do so, for then he will kill me, too," said the princess, but at that instant he came in.

"I smell the blood of a Christian," said he, and caught sight of the prince. "Who are you? You shall die instantly," roared he.

"I think we will delay that a little," replied the prince, crushing the egg in his pocket. Then the giant fell on his knees and begged and begged that his life might be spared.

"Bring forward the other princesses," said the prince, and there was no help for it; but when they came out of their enchantment, the prince pinched the egg so the giant died.

The princesses were glad at this, you may be sure, and each one of them tied a gold ring into the prince's hair.

After they had gathered up all they wished to take with them, they went down to the ship, and the other eleven princes were very much astonished when they saw the twelve beautiful princesses. Just as they were ready to put out to sea, the youngest princess found she had forgotten her work-box and the youngest prince sprang back after it. The brothers wished to be rid of him so they could say it was they who had rescued the princesses, so they pushed out from land and left the prince alone on the island.

The prince became very sad when he found he was left alone, and knew no way to get off from the island. As he was walking along, he met a little, gray old man.

"Who are you?" asked the prince.

"Oh! I am so old, so old," said the man. "But I will help you to get away from here, if you will do as I bid you."

The prince promised and the old man gave him a box and said: "This is a wishing box, and if you only wish it, you can come to the palace of the princesses in twelve hours, but the others will not be there for seven years. Then you must serve as a scullion in their palace, but must never take off your cap till the right time comes."

Then the prince wished himself to the palace, and he was there before he knew it, and there he became a scullion.

After seven years had gone by, the twelve princesses and the eleven princes came home, and there was great rejoicing, and the wedding preparations began to be made.

Then the youngest princess wished to sprinkle the head of everybody in the house, before the wedding took place, and this she did. Then she asked if no one remained, when they stopped coming in.

"Yes, there is a scullion down in the kitchen," said the king, "but you can leave him out."

"No, bring him here," said the princess, and the youth came in. But as she was getting the things ready, he bent down and kissed her. Then the king became wrathy over such insolence, and said the scullion should lose his head.

"First I shall sprinkle him," said the princess. So she took off his cap and there she saw the gold rings in his hair.

"Here is the right one," cried she. "Here is my ring!" And all the princesses recognized their rings again.

"Here is your work-box," said the prince, taking out the sewing materials. Then they all knew that this was the prince who had gone through all the dangers. So the king said to him:

"Why did you not tell me this at once?"

"I wished to see if they regretted what they had done first," answered the prince, "but they did not."

"Well, what shall you do to punish them?" asked the king.

"Oh! each one may have his princess," replied he, "so he can go home; but I will take the youngest one, and the captain may have the ship and all that is in it."

Well, everything went as the prince said, and a wedding took place, such as no one has seen before or since. But the youngest pair lived happy all their days and when the old king died, they ruled over the whole kingdom.

ABOUT A BOY NAMED SÅPEN.*

ONCE on a time there was a nobleman in the world, who was immensely rich, but so powerfully stingy, that sometimes he would hardly eat.

However, he was going to give a party once, because he was obliged to do so, for he had been invited to so many.

Now there was a chore boy, who was called Såpen, an ill-favored creature, who laid a wager with his master that he should go to the miserly lord's dinner, too. The master thought it was impossible for Såpen to get an invitation, for the master knew perfectly well how miserly the other was, so he laid one hundred dollars on the wager.

But Såpen knew well enough how to deal with the stingy man, as you shall see. The party was to take place on a Sunday, and the lord was to go to church to meet his guests.

Then Såpen ran out on the road in front of him and said:

"About how much can a gold piece the size of a roof tile, be worth, should you think?"

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* Pronounced Soapen.

"Hush, hush!" said the nobleman, "and come to me at dinner time, and we will talk about it."

Well, Såpen was delighted with this answer, and went his way; but at dinner time he went up to the house of the miserly man, who greeted him and received him in his best manner.

Såpen's master was much astonished at this, and gave him his hundred dollars and bade him go home; but Såpen wanted a good dinner, so he staid. He was allowed to sit by the door while they were eating, and that was not pleasant, but he was at the dinner, anyway.

After they had eaten till they were satisfied and had got up, the miserly lord took Såpen into a chamber, and asked him where he had the lump of gold he spoke about.

"Oh!" said Såpen, "I have not got any, you know; I only asked how much such a lump could be worth, in case a body should find one."

THE GILDED NOSE TIP.

There was once a woman who had two daughters; one was her own, the other was a step-daughter. She was very ugly to the step-daughter, who could never do anything to suit her. Finally she pushed the girl into the pond one day, when she went to fetch water.

But the spring led to an underground passage, and the girl came into that, and soon found herself before a door made of glass, which spoke and said:

"Open me very gently and close me again very softly, so I will not break in pieces."

And the girl did so.

Then she came to an old fence, which was nearly falling to the ground, and it said:

"Step over me so carefully that I will not fall in pieces."

The girl stepped over so carefully that the fence was not even shaken.

When she had gone further, she came to an oven full of bread, and it said:

"Eat as much as you wish, but do not take any away." The girl ate, but did not take any away.

Then she came to an orchard and it said:

"You may pluck and eat as much as you wish, but do not take anything with you."

The girl plucked and ate, but took nothing with her.

After she had gone further, she came to a large estate, where they had a great many half-starved kittens, and she had to take care of them. Well, she did this and gave them food, so they grew fat and handsome.

Then one day they gave her a certain amount of spinning and weaving to do, which she was to have done by night. The girl wept, for she thought it was impossible to do it. But the cats came and sat and spun and wove with her, so it was all done by evening.

The next day they sent her to the brook with yarn, which was black and white; the white was to be washed black, and the black white. Then she wept again, for she thought it was impossible. But the cats came again and showed her the spot where the yarn must be washed to make it black and to make it white, and she did it right.

Finally, she was to have a casket to take with her, as reward. Then the cats mewed:

"Take the yellow one; take the yellow one," and she did so. Then they gave her such fine clothes that she looked like a princess.

Then she started on her journey back and came to her step-mother's again. The woman was filled with astonishment at sight of the grand clothes, and when she heard all that had happened, she pushed her own daughter into the pond.

This one also came into the underground path, but she did not do as her half-sister had done ; but broke the glass door, trampled down the fence, took bread with her, and hid apples and pears in her pockets.

When she came to the large estate she starved the kittens worse than ever, and when she had to weave and wash the yarn, she did not succeed at all. Finally she was to receive her reward and go. When she was about to take a casket, the cats mewed :

" Take the yellow one ; take the yellow one."

"Silence, you wretches, and let me choose for myself," said the girl.

And so she took the red casket and went home, but when she came to her mother's house she was ragged, and looked just as dirty as before.

Then the girls opened the caskets they had received.

" You may open yours in the house," said the woman to her own daughter.

" Where may I open mine ? " asked the step-daughter.

"You will have to do it in the old pig-sty," said the woman, and the step-daughter went out.

When the own daughter opened her casket, hot flames burst out so the cottage caught fire and burned down, and the woman and her daughter had to go out quicker than usual.

But when the step-daughter opened her casket, there came out so much gold and silver, that all the walls of the pig-sty were covered, and the girl became powerfully rich. When the step-mother grew curious and peeped in, the tip of her nose became gilded; but that was all that fell to her share.

THE IMPRISONED PRINCESS.

There was once a widowed queen, who had an only daughter, towards whom she was very strict. Then the daughter had a suitor, but as she was not allowed to wed with him, they were married in secret.

When the widowed queen found this out, she grew so angry that she had the princess walled into a tower, so she might die of thirst. But the princess was very devout and prayed to God, and then a fountain sprang up in one corner of the tower, and kind-hearted people carried a little food to her which she took in through a crack in the door.

Then a son was born, and the princess brought him up in the tower till he was seven years old. Then she wished the boy to go out into the world and not be a prisoner all his days. But the only opening in the tower was high up and he could not go out through that, for then he would have fallen to the earth and been killed. She dreamed one night that she had a long rope by her side. and when she awoke, there it lay, but she did not know how or whence it came there.

She now let the boy down by the rope, to the ground, and he left his mother with tears in his eyes. After he had walked awhile he met an old man who asked him why he wept. The boy told him how badly off he was, and the old man gave him a staff, saying, when he should strike anything with it any animal he wished would come forward.

Then the boy struck the staff against a stone and wished for a horse so small that he could climb up on his back; and instantly such a horse stood before him. He mounted his little horse and rode a long time, till he came to a king's house, where he entered the service of the warden of the castle.

Here he lived several years. One day his master told him that the king had three daughters, whom he must give to three goblins because in time of war they had helped him. Now there was much sorrow and lamentation at the castle, and the king said that he who could save the princesses, should choose one of them for his bride. Then the young prince — no one knew he was one — said that he would rescue them from the goblins. All laughed at the idea of one who was a mere child, doing such a thing. But he persisted, so they let him talk with the king. He said he wished to fight with the goblins and he gained permission to do so.

There was a large forest near the castle, and the princesses were to be left in that. Now the eldest princess rode out there, and three courtiers and the little prince went with her. After they had ridden into the forest a little distance, they heard a great roaring, at which the courtiers became so terrified, that each one climbed up in a tree. But the prince struck his staff against a stone and wished that a whole lot of the wildest and most dreadful beasts might spring up, and they were there in an instant. Finally, the goblin came up, and he was frightful to see, with his fifteen heads.

As he strode up to the carriage where the princess sat, the boy cried to the beasts:

"Seize him, tear him in pieces!"

Then all the beasts rushed at the goblin, and soon he was torn to bits, and the princess saved.

But the young prince was left in the woods, and the princess was made to promise that she would tell her father that the courtiers rescued her.

The next day they rode out with the second princess to the forest, and there they met the little prince. When the goblin came the prince called forth his beasts, and the goblin was killed, though he was both larger and stronger than the first. The princess had to promise to tell her father the same as her sister, and the prince was content to remain in the forest.

Lastly, the youngest princess was sent out, and then the grief was greatest, for she was dearest of all to her parents. But the courtiers, who had faith in the help of the little prince, promised the king and queen that no harm should come to her.

It went as before, but the princess drew a gold ring from her hand and bound it into the prince's hair as a token of the help he had given.

When they rode home, the prince was left in the forest, and the princess was obliged to tell her parents the same as her sisters had said.

The prince now wished for a horse, and when it came forth, he rode to the king's castle, where they were preparing the wedding of the princesses and their false rescuers. The prince did not go in, but rode around into the garden, and when he caught sight of the princesses, he rode up and whispered to them secretly.

When they saw the ring in his hair, they all recognized their preserver, instantly, and burst into tears. But the youngest ran to her parents and told them all that had happened. Finally she said :

" See, he wears on his head the ring you gave me, father. I bound it there in the forest when he rescued me from the goblin. Can you doubt what I say?"

Then the prince was called in, and he told the same story of what had happened, and also told who he was.

Then the king was very angry at the courtiers, and they were driven out of the kingdom, but the young prince and princess were married, and the king sent people to the tower who tore it down, and released the mother of the prince.

THE WATER-GOD BY THE MILL.

ONE lovely summer evening a priest was riding along and was just going to cross a bridge near a mill, when he heard the most beautiful music he had ever heard in his life. In order to hear it better he got off his horse and went nearer. Then he saw the water-god sitting there by the mill-wheel, playing on his harp. As the priest came nearer the bridge, he saw two small creatures, who were dancing to the music of the harp. But as the priest stood and watched them, he could not keep still any longer, but began to dance, too, and then it was impossible for him to stop. When he had come up to the two pigmies, who were dancing around, he took hold of their hands, and they swung around in a ring, they three. But after he had done this awhile he did not wish to dance any longer, but his power to stand still was gone. Then he hit on the plan of stopping up his ears, to see if he could stand still. Then he stopped up the ears of the pigmies, too, and so they all stopped dancing, for they could not hear the beautiful music any longer. The pigmies sprang into the woods, and the priest saw nothing more of them; but then the water-god stopped playing, for when the priest rode back that way, there was nothing to be heard.

THE BEAUTIFUL VILLAGE MAID.

THERE was once a hard-working man who was married twice, and the first time he had a boy and a girl. The boy was employed in the stable at the king's castle, but the sister remained at home with the step-mother, who was very cruel to her, although the girl was as gentle as a girl could be. Still the wicked step-mother hated her, mostly because she was so beautiful, and her own daughter, on the contrary, was so homely and hateful.

One day the step-daughter was sent to the spring for water. There lay three heads that were dirty and hideous. They said to the girl:

"Take us up and wash us, and lay us carefully back again, and you shall have pure water." The girl did as the heads begged her, and laid them carefully back again.

When she had gone, the first head said to the second one:

"What shall we wish for the one who was so kind to us?"

"I wish that she may be the most beautiful maiden in the world," said the first head.

"I wish that she may have a dress as fine as the sun and stars," said the second head.

"And I wish that a gold apple may fall from her mouth every time she laughs," said the third.

Now when the step-mother saw how handsome she was, and how many fine things she had, she sent out her own daughter, too.

When the girl came to the spring, the heads lay there as before and spoke to her as to her sister. But she threw her pail at them, and ran away.

Then the heads wished that she might be the most hideous-looking girl in the world; that all the clothes she put on might look horrid; and that every time she laughed, a toad might hop out of her mouth; and it all came to pass.

One day the stable boy at the castle made a picture of his sister out of clay. Then the king asked him if he knew of any such beautiful maiden in the world. The boy replied that his sister looked like that.

"Bring her hither; she shall be my queen," said the king then. The boy was given a ship, and a crew, and sailed home after his sister, and the step-mother and step-sister went back with him too.

But on the way the woman pushed her step-daughter into the sea, so her own daughter could be queen.

When they arrived, the king was down on the shore to receive his bride, and the path from the beach to the castle was carpeted with the finest cloth, and the castle was decorated with fine draperies and other grand things.

The boy went below in the ship to get his sister, but she was gone. When the boy said that she had been pushed into the sea, the ugly step-mother and her daughter denied it, and the king believed them.

He could not do otherwise now than take the hideous girl for his bride, but he had the boy cast into a snake pit, for he believed that he had deceived him.

The beautiful maiden was captured by a sea nymph and had to live in the sea. She had a dog that she was very fond of; he was now at the king's castle, and was named Saker.

One day she begged the sea nymph to let her go up and pat Saker. She was told that she might go on three Thursday evenings, but afterwards she could never go on the earth again.

In order that she might not run away, the sea nymph bound her foot with a chain.

When she came up to the castle she called out:

"Saker, are you awake?"

"Yes," answered the dog.

"Is that hideous girl in the king's palace?"

"Yes; she is there," answered Saker.

"Is my brother still in the snake pit?"

"Yes; he is still there," said the dog.

"It is so cold, so cold on the bottom of the sea," said she; but before she left, she scoured the floor in the room where the dog was, patted his head, laid a gold apple in the window, and went down to the sea, because the nymph had begun to draw on the chain.

In the morning people wondered who it was that had laid the gold apple in the window, and Saker was moved to another room.

The next Thursday night the same thing happened, but two apples were laid in the window. The people talked about what had happened to the king, and he decided to watch over the dog himself.

The third Thursday night the beautiful maiden came back and talked in the same way, but added that she should never come again. She laid three gold apples in the window, and told the dog to give them to the king.

The sea nymph now began to pull on the chain, but the king sprang forward and severed it with his magic sword, and she was rescued. Now everything was revealed, and the king took the beautiful maiden for his queen, brought the brother from the snake pit, but cast the wicked step-mother and her daughter into the prison tower.

THE SILVER BOWL.

MANY, many years ago there lived a lord and his lady, on a very fine estate. They had only one son, and he lay very sick. Then the mother went to a very wise old woman who lived in a forest, to ask her help, but the woman was not at home.

As the mother was on her way home again, she heard some one scream dreadfully from the little pond which lay beside the road. When she went and looked in, there lay a girl in the water, and she could not get out.

When the lady helped the girl out, the latter said that she was the spirit of that forest, and that every day she changed to a goose and bathed in the pond; but a hunter had shot her and wounded a wing, so she had been allowed to change herself to a human being in order to be saved.

Now the woman told the wood spirit why she was out in the forest, and how sick her son was. Then the spirit gave her a silver bowl and said she must let the sick one drink out of it.

When the mother came home she gave her son some water to drink out of the bowl, and immediately he became better, and in a few days was perfectly well again. The silver bowl was guarded as the dearest treasure in the wealthy family.

After many, many years had gone by, and a wedding was being celebrated (when a rich earl married a daughter of the house), the lord of the estate had drunk so much wine that he became rash. He took the cherished silver bowl in his hand and said the family had always believed that its prosperity depended on the gift of the wood nymph. To prove this was not true, he threw the bowl in the sea, which moaned outside of the open window. Then a sound, like a deep sigh, passed through the room, and all who were there grew suddenly pale-faced.

The same night while all were sleeping, there came a band of robbers and took possession of the house. They burned the buildings, killed the people and carried away all the treasures. Only the master, the one who cast the silver bowl in the sea, escaped with his life; but his possessions were gone and his reason lost. Day and night, as long as he lived, he wandered on the shore, trying to find the silver bowl, but it lies to this day on the bottom of the sea.

THE GOAT THAT WOULDN'T GO HOME AT TWILIGHT.

There was once a goat that wouldn't go home at twilight. When the old woman who had charge of him, went after him one evening, she met a wolf. Then she said:

"Dear wolf, will you rend the goat? The goat will not go home at twilight."

"No," said the wolf.

When the woman came farther along, she met a bear.

"Dear bear," said she, "will you not slay the wolf? The wolf will not rend the goat; the goat will not go home at twilight."

"No," said the bear.

When the woman came farther along she met a hunter.

"Dear hunter," said she, "will you not shoot the bear? The bear will not slay the wolf; the wolf will not rend the goat; the goat will not go home at twilight."

"No," said the hunter.

Then the woman came to a pine-tree.

"Dear pine," said she, "will you not crush the hunter? The hunter will not shoot the bear; the bear will not slay the wolf; the wolf will not rend the goat; the goat will not go home at twilight."

"No," said the pine.

Then the woman came to a fire.

"Dear fire," said she, "will you not burn the pine? The pine will not crush the hunter; the hunter will not shoot the bear; the bear will not slay the wolf; the wolf will not rend the goat; the goat will not go home at twilight."

"No," said the fire.

Then the woman came to a pond.

"Dear pond," said she, "will you not quench the fire? The fire will not burn the pine; the pine will not crush the hunter; the hunter will not shoot the bear; the bear will not slay the wolf; the wolf will not rend the goat; the goat will not go home at twilight."

"No," said the pond.

Then the woman met an ox, and said:

"Dear ox, will you not drink the pond? The pond will not quench the fire; the fire will not burn the pine; the pine will not crush the hunter; the hunter will not shoot the bear; the bear will not slay the wolf; the wolf will not rend the goat; the goat will not go home at twilight."

"No," said the ox.

Then the woman came to a rope, and said:

"Dear rope, will you not hang the ox? The ox will not drink the pond; the pond will not quench the fire; the fire will not burn the pine; the pine will not crush the hunter; the hunter will not shoot the bear; the bear will not slay the wolf; the wolf will not rend the goat; the goat will not go home at twilight."

"No," said the rope.

Then the woman met a rat.

"Dear rat," said the woman, "will you not gnaw the rope? The rope will not hang the ox; the ox will not drink the pond; the pond will not quench the fire; the fire will not burn the pine; the pine will not crush the hunter; the hunter will not shoot the bear; the bear will not slay the wolf; the wolf will not rend the goat; the goat will not go home at twilight."

"No," said the rat.

Then the woman saw a cat.

"Dear cat," said she, "will you not catch the rat? The rat will not gnaw the rope; the rope will not hang the ox; the ox will not drink the pond; the pond will not quench the fire; the fire will not burn the pine; the pine will not crush the hunter; the hunter will not shoot the bear; the bear will not slay the wolf; the wolf will not rend the goat; the goat will not go home at twilight."

"Yes," said the cat, and tried to catch the rat;

then the rat was willing to gnaw the rope; the rope to hang the ox; the ox to drink the pond; the pond to quench the fire; the fire to burn the pine; the pine to crush the hunter; the hunter to shoot the bear; the bear to slay the wolf; the wolf to rend the goat; and so the goat was glad to go home at twilight.

THE PRINCESS'S CASKET.

A LONG time ago — when trees and animals could talk — there lived on Ubbyfjället,* over in Järbo † parish in Dal, a giant whose name was Grepe. ‡ He had his castle in the middle of the mountain, and it was of pure gold and precious stones. He lived alone, and he grew so angry when any one came that way, that he threw great stones after him, so no one dared go near the grand castle, however much they wished to do so.

But one day Grepe began to feel lonesome, so he told the spruce-trees that grew on the mountain that they must help him to get possession of the princess who lived near, and who was so beautiful that whoever saw her became charmed with her.

The spruces promised to help the giant, so they drew near and sang so grandly, that it was as if sea nymphs played on their harps in the twilight. When the princess heard the song, she was so enraptured that she went into the forest.

Before she was aware of it, she was beside the giant's castle, and the giant came out and bore her in. He soon became so fond of her that he could not keep his eyes off of her.

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* Pronounced Ubby-fyellet. † Pronounced Yair-boo. ‡ Pronounced Gray-py.

Now when the king heard that the princess was gone, he suspected all that had happened, and he gathered together a great number of people to go out and make war upon the giant. But he did not succeed in this, for you see the giant threw stones and earth around, so the whole army was buried, and the princess had to remain where she was.

But she had no comfort in the mountain, and grieved so deeply that finally she died.

Then it was terrible for the giant, and the whole forest sighed and wept. The giant said, however, that he would bury the princess more grandly than any one had ever been buried before.

In order that the people should not know of her casket, he arranged so that no one should see it until the day when seven brothers who had never disagreed should search for it.

Then he made a casket of purest gold, and buried it deep under his porch. But now he did not wish to live longer, so he went out and cast himself over a precipice that is called the Giant's Cliff to this day.

After a long, long time had passed by, there were seven brothers found who had never disagreed. They went to the mountain and searched, and got a glimpse of the casket, too.

Now they had nearly drawn up the casket when one of them said that he was the first one to see it, and then they began to quarrel. Like a flash the casket sank down in the earth again, and no one has seen it from that day to this.

But the place where it lies has been called Gold Rose ever since.

THE BOY WHO CHEATED THE EVIL ONE.

THERE was once a boy who was servant to a miserly peasant. The boy had to work both early and late, but got very little food, and the peasant scolded him much and often besides. The only one who was kind to him was the peasant's daughter, who hid a nice bit of food for him now and then, so at last they became fond of each other; but it was not possible for the poor servant boy to think of the rich, miserly peasant's daughter, of course.

The peasant had many peculiar ways, and, besides, was in league with the Evil One himself, and had been helped by him to one thing and another.

One day when the boy asked for his pay, the peasant grew so angry that he threw a bank-note at him and said:

"Take that, and may the Evil One take you!" and then the old money-bags went into the house.

But just as he had gone, the Evil One came forward, and said to the servant:

"Will you not give yourself into my power?

You cannot have it worse then than you have it now."

The boy thought a few minutes, and said:

"I will promise, if you can fill a stocking with shining silver dollars in an hour."

The Evil One thought that was a great bargain, so he went home after money; but they were to meet again at sundown at a barn out in the forest.

The boy went ahead and climbed up on the roof; there he made a hole in the straw, and in the hole placed a stocking; but he had cut the foot off, so it was open right through.

At the time agreed, the Evil One came hurrying along, so it roared and whistled and the smell of sulphur filled the air. And he began to pour money in the stocking, but it ran down into the barn; still he kept on a long time. Finally he was obliged to go home after more money, and go through the same operation again. But when the hour was nearly out, his money was exhausted, and the boy said:

"Just see how wicked you are; you cannot do an honest deed, once," and he threw the bank-note into the stocking after the other money. Then the Evil One had no more power over it, but had to go his way, since he had lost, although he was wrathy, which is not surprising.

When the boy peeped into the barn, he saw a tremendously high pile of money, enough to make him a rich man.

Then he went and told the peasant that he was rich, and as a proof of it he took two fists full of silver out of his pocket and threw it on the table.

Then the miserly peasant became very amiable, you may believe, and when the boy asked for his daughter, he got her on the spot.

THE ASHBOY WHO WON THE PRINCESS.

There was once a king who had a daughter whom no one could make laugh, no one could get the last word with, and no one could make to say, "That is not true!"

Now the king sent out a promise, that the one who could make her do all this should have her for his bride.

A certain man had three sons, and two of them were as fine fellows as could be found, but the third was so stupid that he never went out, but sat all the time by the fireplace, so he got the name of Ashboy.

One day the two brothers went up to the castle, to see if they could win the princess, and the Ashboy wished to go with them. The brothers would not agree to that, but told him to stay at home. Still he went with them, although they forbade him.

After he had gone a little way, he found a dead magpie, and he put it in his pocket.

"What shall you do with that?" asked the brothers.

"It may be useful for something," said the Ashboy.

After they had walked further, he found an old ox-horn, a willow twig, a wedge and two ragged shoe soles, and for each thing he found his brothers asked as before, and he replied in the same way:

"It may be useful sometime."

Both brothers came to the castle first, but they had no luck at all, and were shown out.

When the Ashboy came up, the princess sat in her carriage in the court yard, and the carriage was almost as light as a feather. Then the Ashboy took the skin off of the magpie, cut it in fine strips, and fastened one end to the carriage and the other end to the gate, and then he set fire to the feathers. Now when they burned, the skin shrunk together so that the carriage came forward to the gate. The princess thought this was so amusing that she had to laugh.

"Now you are mine," said the Ashboy.

"You cannot win me with that," said the princess.

She afterwards took him to a room that was so hot one could hardly breathe there.

"It is powerfully hot here," said the Ashboy.

"It shall be warmer for my husband," said the princess.

"Then I could roast this magpie in it," said the boy.

"All the fat would run away," said the princess.

"I have a horn to hold under it," said the Ashboy, and took the old ox-horn out of his pocket.

"That would crack into pieces," she said.

"I have a twig to bind around it," said the Ashboy, and took out the willow twig.

"The twig is too large," objected the princess.

"I have this wedge to set between," said the boy.

"The wedge is too small," insisted the princess.

"I have a shoe sole to put beside it," said the Ashboy, drawing out one sole from his pocket.

"I never saw the like," cried the princess then.

"Well, here you have it," said the Ashboy, drawing out the other sole.

Then she became speechless, and the Ashboy said:

"Now you are mine."

"You cannot have me for that," said she, and then she took him to the barnyard, and asked him if he had ever seen such a large barn before.

"Oh! this is not so dreadfully large," said the boy. "My parents had one so large that when a calf was born in one end, he could not reach the other before he was an old ox, and when the carpenters who were building it dropped an ax from the roof at Michaelmas, it did not reach the floor before the swallows came back. My father had so many cows that we milked whole lakes full, and so we harnessed the horses to churn it, and made cheeses as big as a potato field. When I went out to tend the cattle and took a slice of cheese with me, it was so large a young colt could frolic around on it. But I took the colt and flayed it alive, and cut strips from its hide and bound them together, and crept up on the rope to the moon, and there sat your father and mother begging crumbs of bread from my father and mother!"

"That is not true," cried the princess, because then she was angry. But the Ashboy said:

"Now you are mine," and so she was, though the Ashboy was considered stupid and good-for-nothing.

THE FAITHFUL SISTER.

In a country far away from here there once lived a queen who had twelve sons, but no daughter. One day when she was out sleighing, she struck her hand against a spike in the sleigh, so several drops of blood fell on the snow. Then she said:

"If I only had a daughter with cheeks as white as snow and red as blood, I would willingly give all my sons for her!" Instantly an old woman came to the sleigh and asked if the queen meant what she said. When she answered yes, the witch promised she should have her wish.

By and by a daughter was born in the palace, and the same day the witch was seen going back and forth in front of the windows, and when she disappeared, the sons flew from the palace, all changed to birds.

In the meantime the daughter grew up and became a most lovely maiden. But by degrees she grew sad and silent, and when the queen noticed it and asked her what the matter was, she said if there was anything in the world her daughter wanted, she should have it.

The princess replied that she did not want anything especially, but she felt very lonesome without any brothers, as other girls had. Then her mother said:

"You have had twelve brothers, but I gave them all away for you."

The princess answered:

"If I have had twelve brothers, I will go out and seek them, if they are in the world."

Then she took all the things she and her brothers had had alike, and started on her journey. Towards evening she lay down under a tree to sleep; then she dreamed that she saw two roads, a broad one and a narrow one, and the narrow one led to a cottage deep in the forest. When she woke up, she saw there were two just such roads beside her, as she had dreamed of, and she followed the narrow one. Finally she came, towards evening, to a little cottage, but no one was at home. But various things were lying on the table, which were like those she had taken with her, and so she knew that her brothers lived here.

Then she prepared a meal from what she found in the cottage, set the table and laid her brothers' knives and forks beside their plates, and her own beside one. Then she heard a noise outside the cottage, and hid herself under one of the beds.

When the princes, who had the forms of men again, saw the table set and a new plate, knife and fork, just like their own, lying on it, they knew their sister was there. Then the youngest said:

"It is surely our sister who is here; if we can find her, she shall die, because it is she that brought us our misfortune."

But the eldest brother replied: "It was not she, but the witch who had our mother in her power. Our sister is innocent, so why should she die?"

When they found her there was great joy, although they were so unhappy. The sister asked if there were no way in which she could rescue them. There was only one way, they said. She must make them garments of linen which grew in a foreign land; but if she spoke, laughed or cried during the time she was working on them, they could never be saved.

The sister said at once that she would make such clothes for them, so the brothers flew away to bring the linen. She now worked from early in the morning till late in the evening, and not a word passed over her lips, not a smile was seen on her face, not a tear in her eyes.

One day it was so lonesome in the cottage that she went out into the forest with her work. Then the young king of the land rode by, and when he saw her he was so charmed with her beauty that he decided to make her his queen, and so took her to his castle. But she carried her work with her and kept on as before.

Every one grew fond of the young queen, although she neither spoke, laughed nor wept; but the old queen was never kind to her, and was always watching to do her harm.

Now when the young queen had a son, the old queen had it killed, and told the king that the child's mother had done it. When the latter did not speak a word in self-defense, she was declared guilty and doomed to death. The young king wept, but was not allowed to do differently by her.

The same day that the queen was taken out to be burned (which was the customary fate of witches), she finished the last garment and took all with her in the rough cart in which she rode. Then the twelve brothers came flying and settled down around her, and she cast over each one his garment. At once they returned to their human forms, and told the king all that had happened. The queen did not need to keep silence any longer, then, and so all was explained about the child's death. She was then driven back to the castle by the king's side and with great honor.

Then the king asked his mother:

"What punishment does one deserve who takes a mother's child, murders it, and then charges it to the innocent mother, so she will be burned as a witch?"

The wicked woman did not know that all had been discovered, so she said:

"She should be burned."

By this answer she sealed her own fate, and what she said should be done was done.

Then the king celebrated his wedding for the second time, and as the bride could now talk and laugh, it was a joyous wedding, and the joy was not a little due to the bride's twelve brothers, who were the most stately princes one could see. And the young pair passed all their days in happiness.

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